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HAS CONGRESS FAILED?

A Historical Survey of the Years 1918-1939

BY

A STUDENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

NO one will deny that the outstanding figure in India during the last quarter of a century has been Mr. M. K. Gandhi. If, therefore, we set out to examine the record of the party with which his name is associated, we must do so largely against the background of his activities. He above all is the man who has moulded public opinion and shaped the course of political events ; and to him more than to any other individual the world must assign the lion's share of praise or blame for the position in which political India finds itself today.

We are generally too close to events that have just occurred to form an impartial judgment of them. On the other hand, memories are short ; in considering the present we are apt to forget the past of even a few years' ago ; and it is always useful to turn our minds back and attempt to bring into proper perspective a measurable chapter in the life of our times. For this purpose we propose to review, as objectively as possible, the twenty-one years falling roughly between the end of the last and the beginning of the present war. We shall divide that period into four well marked phases.

Before starting the story the reader will wish to have a brief idea of what the Indian National Congress was and what it stood for up to the end of the last war. He will also wish to have some estimate of Mr. Gandhi's character and aims as these were understood at that time.

Congress, before it came under Mr. Gandhi's domination, may justly claim to have stood for all that was most progressive in Indian nationalism. The first article of its creed, as adopted in 1908, ran as follows :—

**Pre-1918
Congress.**

“ The objects of the Indian National Congress are the attainment by the people of India of a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and a

participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members. These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means, by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration and by promoting national unity, fostering public spirit and developing and organizing the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country."

It is perhaps the best summary of the earlier attitude of Congress towards the British Government that until about 1918 the proceedings at its annual sessions invariably concluded with cheers for H. M. the King Emperor. At Bombay in 1918 the response was given not in the usual fashion, but with thrice repeated cries of "Bande Mataram".

Mr. Gokhale had died in February, 1915 ; but Mr. Tilak was still the leading national figure until his death in August, 1920.

Tilak. He was in many ways Mr. Gandhi's opposite. "He belonged to the hereditary intellectual aristocracy of Maharashtra. He stood for Brahmin supremacy over India and for Brahmin control of India's destinies. A ruthless aristocrat and a bold and subtle fighter, throughout his life-time a perpetual thorn in the side of the administration, he retained to the last a firm hold upon the intellectual aristocracy of India. Where Mr. Gandhi appealed to the masses, to the simple and to the uneducated, Mr. Tilak based his strength upon the traditional dominance of the Brahmin aristocracy." (India in 1920 page 40.)

Gandhi — The Social Reformer. As for Mr. Gandhi, Professor Rushbrook Williams may again be quoted :—

"Mr. Gandhi, who is probably more widely known throughout the world than any other individual living in India today, has for the major portion of his life been convinced that modern civilization is a mistake. He believes, like his master, the late Count Tolstoy, that the vast social and economic structure built upon the scien-

tific discoveries of the 19th century is pernicious in its effect upon the individual man. He conceives that modern education develops in those subject to its influence the mentality of a slave ; that all the machinery of complex civilization—hospitals, doctors, law courts, railways, parliaments—do but serve to increase the gulf between man and God. The sole end of rightly directed human activity, according to Mr. Gandhi, is the freedom of the individual soul ; and anything which, by adding to the complexity of life, threatens to hinder that freedom, is by nature bad. Mr. Gandhi believes that the only rule by which man can attain natural and primitive simplicity, which in his eyes ranks so far above economic, political and industrial advance, lies in the mastery by spiritual force of material might. The weapon of passive resistance therefore appeals to him strongly, whether as a means of securing national regeneration through the conquest by love of evil powers ; or as an irresistible lever for the redress of grievances suffered by a people at the hands of its Government. * * * For long he had enjoyed among his Hindu co-religionists the authority with which India envelopes a saintly ascetic. Further, much of his doctrine was akin to orthodox Hindu practice. His insistence upon the supremacy of soul force, his advocacy of national fasting as a means of influencing Government, his conviction of the irresistible power of passive resistance, have all three their basis in the ancient Hindu doctrine Dharna."

From this picture Mr. Gandhi stands out as a social reformer and not as a politician ; but as time goes on, it becomes increasingly difficult to discern behind his acts the purpose of this philosophy. The impression grows that he was at all times more concerned with the defeat of the British Government than with the regeneration of his own people and that, as his power increased, he came to regard it more and more as an end in itself—or, at least, as a means only to the political domination of his country.

**Gandhi — The
Politician.**

In assessing the reasons for the unbreakable hold over his countrymen that Mr. Gandhi so soon came to possess, one may give due weight to the nature of his programme and especially to the religious appeal that his mode of life and thought undoubtedly exercised ; but above all there is his own magnetic personality.

Gandhi — The Man.

He has always cast a spell, to which few who have met him have been able to remain insensible, while it has won for him the fanatical devotion of many. The important fact, whatever may be the reasons, is that by the time our story opens Mr. Gandhi had secured for himself an unassailable position in the hearts, if not in the brains, of millions both inside and outside India. He was above criticism. He could do no wrong. Above all, he must not be offended. What an asset—and in certain circumstances what an embarrassment—such a leader can be to his followers will become apparent as the story unfolds.

In July, 1914, Mr. Gandhi had left South Africa for good

Gandhi's return to India and subsequent activities.

and he was in England before the last Great War broke out. On the eve of its declaration he placed his services and those of his friends in England at the unconditional disposal of the authorities " as an earnest of our desire to share the responsibilities of membership of this great Empire, if we should share its privileges ". His subsequent illness prevented him from carrying active co-operation into practice ; but on his return to India early in 1915 he repeated his offer to the Viceroy and it was only because, in the words of Lord Hardinge, his presence in India at that critical moment would be of more service than any that he might be able to render abroad that his proposal to raise a corps of stretcher bearers and hospital assistants for duty in Mesopotamia was not accepted. In India at that time all interest was centred in the war ; political agitation was at a low ebb ; and Congress itself was moribund. Everywhere and by all parties Mr. Gandhi was received with enthusiasm. Even Government marked its appreciation of his work in South Africa by conferring on him the Kaiser-i-Hind

gold medal. After a year spent in touring India and making himself acquainted with its problems, he settled down in the Sabarmati Ashram which he had founded at Ahmedabad. The political leadership of Gujarat was his for the asking and soon he became generally known as "Mahatma". Thereafter he conducted a few local experiments in satyagraha, such as the campaign in Champaran, in the course of which he was prosecuted and returned his gold medal, and in the Kaira district of Bombay. He attended the Lucknow session of the Congress in December, 1916, in the company of Mr. Tilak and Mrs. Besant, but until the end of the war he kept generally aloof from party politics. Although he refused at first to attend the Delhi War Conference in 1918 on the ground that Government had failed to invite the co-operation of Mr. Tilak and Mrs. Besant, he was actually present at the meeting and had an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, with which he expressed himself satisfied.

CHAPTER II

1918-1922

The famous declaration of August 20th, 1917, had given official sanction to India's claim to progressively responsible government within the Empire. The next 20 years were spent not in the repudiation of that pledge, as is so often alleged, but in a struggle by H. M.'s Government to honour it in the face of almost continuous obstruction. After the declaration there followed Mr. Montagu's visit to India and the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford report in 1918. Then came the Franchise and Functions Committees under Lord Southborough in the cold weather of 1918-19; Lord Crewe's committee in London; the reforms despatch of the Government of India; the Joint Select Committee under Lord Selborne; and finally the passing of the Government of India Act of 1919 and the famous Royal Proclamation with which His Majesty's assent to the Reforms Act was announced to the world at the end of that year. A little over twelve months later the new electoral rolls had been prepared and the elections had taken place. On February 9th, 1921, H. R. H. the Duke of Connaught inaugurated the Parliament of India and, after delivering His Majesty's message, concluded with a personal appeal, which few who heard it are likely to forget.

"I have reached a time of life when I most desire to heal wounds and reunite those who have been disunited. In what must be, I fear, my last visit to the India I love so well, here in the new capital, inaugurating a new constitution, I am moved to make you a personal appeal, but in the simple words that come from my heart, not to be coldly and critically interpreted. My experience tells me that misunderstandings usually mean mistakes on either side. As an old friend of India, I appeal to you all, British and Indians, to bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to forgive where

you have to forgive and to join hands and to work together to realize the hopes that rise from to-day."

The three and a half years which it took to give effect to the announcement of August 1917 seem short in comparison with the ten long years which succeeded the appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927. The reforms then enacted came into partial effect on April 1st, 1937. They represented, no doubt, a greater achievement; but their progress was hampered by a degree of obstruction at every stage which was far greater than anything through which the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had to pass.

The Montagu-Chelmsford report had, it is true, accentuated the divergences between those sections of Indian opinion (Congress was not yet an organized political party with defined membership) which were known as the Moderate

1918. Reactions to Montagu-Chelmsford report.

or National Liberal Party and the Extremist or Nationalist Party—the former desiring to expand the scheme, but being satisfied that it would constitute a basis for future political progress: the latter regarding the whole scheme as disappointing and unsatisfactory. A special session of the Congress to consider the report, while condemning the scheme and demanding full provincial autonomy, had compromised, as a concession to moderate opinion, with the suggestion that law, justice and police might be "reserved" for six years; but the Delhi session at the end of 1918 threw over the essential basis of this compromise by demanding provincial autonomy at once; and a year later at Amritsar the extreme view prevailed. The Moderates refused to accept the invitation of the Indian National Congress to attend this session and held a separate conference in Calcutta. The Amritsar session of December 1919 took place just after the Royal

1919. The Amritsar Congress.

Proclamation already referred to; but there was no acknowledgment of the gracious spirit which informed the whole of that kingly message or of the generous amnesty and release of prisoners

1918-1922

which it announced and which produced so great an effect on the rest of India. The speeches displayed a violence which was unprecedented at that time; a motion for the recall of Lord Chelmsford was carried; and the Reforms scheme was again denounced as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing." A word of thanks was, however, given to Mr. Montagu for his labours in connection with the Reforms. On this occasion, it is true, Mr. Gandhi himself was still inclined to work the Reforms. He wished to omit the word "disappointing" and to insert a phrase about a loyal response to the Royal Proclamation. But he was overruled. It was not until the middle of 1920 that

**1920. Gandhi
takes control.**

active opposition, in the form of boycotting the Councils, became a specific item in Mr. Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation. A month after Mr. Tilak's death in August 1920 a special session of the Congress was held in Calcutta at which Mr. Gandhi's campaign of non-co-operation received the formal approval of Congress; and the year closed with the annual meeting held at Nagpur, which was again the scene of a notable triumph for Mr. Gandhi. Leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Khaparde were howled down when they attempted to depict, all too truly, the ultimate implications of his programme. "Despite the protests of many who had hitherto represented the front rank of extremist stalwarts; despite the resignation from the Congress of many prominent persons who since the special September session had found themselves out of harmony with the spirit pervading it, Mr. Gandhi not only succeeded in securing the confirmation of his non-co-operation programme, but in addition he was able to alter the old creed of the Congress in such a fashion as to eliminate the declared adherence of that body to the British connection and to constitutional methods of agitation." (India 1920, page 67).

Article I of the revised creed ran as follows:—

"The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means."

It was at this Session that "four anna" membership of the Congress was first introduced in 1921. First elections to Reformed Councils. and it began to emerge as a definitely organized Political Party.

The elections for the new Councils were carried through in the teeth of obstruction and intimidation at every turn, and when the Central Assembly met in February, 1921, it contained no representative of the Nationalist Party referred to above, that is to say of the "official" Congress Party.

It will be seen that throughout this period there was always a strong section—it included such famous personalities as Mrs. Besant, Dr. Sapru and Mr. Surendra Nath Banerji (as they then were), Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, Mr. Chintamani, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Sir Rash Behari Ghose—which was prepared to work the Reforms for what they were worth and make the most of them. The new Councils met in a difficult atmosphere; but the opening meetings were filled with promise and were animated by an obvious desire to seek further constitutional progress by constitutional means.

So much for the constitutional landmarks in the first phase of our period under review. But what had been happening in India meanwhile? What, the uninformed reader may well enquire, is the meaning of the allusions that have been made to a "difficult atmosphere", "Mr. Gandhi's campaign of non-co-operation" and "the Royal amnesty and release of prisoners?" To explain these allusions we must retrace our steps.

On November 11th, 1918, the war had come to an end. One small consequence was that six months later the Defence of India Act would lapse and Government would be left without the powers by which they had succeeded in baffling the policy of terrorism which had shown an alarming increase in the

1919. The Rowlatt Bills.

years before the war. In pursuance, therefore, of the recommendations of the Committee presided over by Sir Sidney Rowlatt in 1918, two Bills were introduced in the Indian Legislative Council in February 1919. The first of these became the famous Rowlatt Act. It was never actually put into operation. The second was dropped altogether and never became law. There were comparatively few people at the time who understood what the Rowlatt Act meant : there are probably far fewer today who have any precise idea of its provisions. " The first of the two Bills was framed to enable anarchical offences to be tried expeditiously by a strong court consisting of three High Court judges, with no right of appeal. This procedure was only to be brought into operation when the Governor-General was satisfied that in any particular part of British India offences of a revolutionary character were prevalent. In circumstances where the Governor-General was satisfied that movements likely to lead to the commission of offences against the State were being extensively prompted, further powers were to be assumed. In an area where these conditions prevailed, the Local Government was to have power to order persons whom it believed to be actively concerned in such a movement to furnish security, to reside in a particular place, or to abstain from any specified act. In order to ensure that the powers of Government were not exercised unreasonably, the Bill provided a safeguard in the constitution of an investigating authority, which was to examine the material upon which orders against any persons were framed. This investigating authority was to include one judicial officer and one non-official Indian. In the third place, when the Governor-General was satisfied that certain offences were being committed to an extent which threatened public safety, the Local Government was given powers to arrest persons believed to be connected with such offences, and to confine them in such places and under such conditions as were prescribed. The Bill further provided, subject to similar provisions as to investigation, for the continued detention of dangerous characters already under control or in confinement. The purpose was simply and solely to

arm Government with power to deal with anarchical movements after the exceptional machinery set up under the Defence of India Act had ceased to be operative." (India 1919, page 25). To such an extent, however, were the objects of the Bill misrepresented that "like wildfire rumours spread through the bazaars that it would impose taxation equal to half a man's income; that it would heavily penalize with pecuniary exactions the humble ceremonies accompanying marriage and death which constitute the principal interest of humble folks' existence; that it would expose the people to intolerable and irretrievable oppression at the hands of the police; that three men might not meet together to discuss village affairs without their being arrested; and that land-owners must realize that crops were the property of Government which they could at short notice commandeer in whole or in part." (India 1919, page 31).

In the state of feeling thus aroused Mr. Gandhi saw an opportunity to try out in India for the first time on a large scale the methods of passive resistance which he had practised so successfully in

First satyagraha movement.

South Africa. Years before, Mr. Gokhale had gone so far as to bind Mr. Gandhi by a promise that he would refrain from launching his scheme until he had thoroughly satisfied himself of its practicability. On the present occasion Mrs. Besant warned Mr. Gandhi in the solemnest manner that any such movement as he contemplated would result in the release of forces whose potentialities for evil were quite incalculable. Undeterred by these warnings he announced in February, 1919, that he would head a passive resistance, or Satyagraha, movement if the Rowlatt Bills were passed; and on March 1st he published a pledge binding those who took it to refuse to obey these laws and "such other laws as the Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit." Popular feeling was worked up to a pitch at which passionate statements were made by the adherents of the movement that they were ready to die—"at a time," as Mrs. Besant remarked, "when no one in the least wanted to kill them." Elements of violence began to appear

1918-1922

in Northern India ; Mr. Gandhi's apprehensions were aroused and he announced his intention of leaving Bombay for the Punjab. He was turned back ; the rumour spread that he had been arrested ; and this proved the signal for violence of the most lamentable description.

There is no need now to trace the course of the Punjab disturbances and the troubles that also occurred in Bombay and Calcutta. Things which should not have been done were done on both sides and it need only be mentioned here that, while the regrettable features of official action have been made, by the annual celebration of what is now called "National Week," to loom larger through the mist of years, the misdeeds of the mob have lapsed into oblivion. Both the majority and the minority reports of the Hunter Commission, which was subsequently set up to enquire into the disturbances, were unanimous in holding the Satyagraha movement largely responsible for creating the feeling against Government which had provoked such serious disorder ; and Mr. Gandhi himself did not deny it. He coined a new phrase ; he admitted "a Himalayan blunder" ; and he announced the suspension of passive resistance. Mr. Gandhi has made many mistakes since and has admitted some of them, but, so far as can be ascertained, he has never repeated this picturesque phrase.

No sooner had the disturbances been quelled than the Afghan war of the summer of 1919 broke out ; and here again, although there were other contributory causes, there can be little doubt that the report of internal disorders in India had greatly stimulated the new Amir in his project of invading the country.

For the rest of 1919 Mr. Gandhi devoted his main attention to the preaching of non-violence ; but a new development soon offered him a further opportunity which he was unable to resist.

**Back to
Non-violence.**

Muslim opinion had become increasingly perturbed since the termination of the war about the peace terms to be imposed on Turkey by the victorious Allies, and particularly about the fate of the Khalifa. Mr. Gandhi saw in this, as he himself said, "such an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muslims as would not arise in a hundred years"; and towards the end of 1919 he accordingly took the unprecedented step of identifying himself with, and constituting himself the leader of, this Muslim agitation.

**The Khilafat
Agitation. Hindu-
Muslim unity.**

March 19th, 1920, was proclaimed as a day of national mourning on behalf of Turkey, to mark the starting point in Mr. Gandhi's first "Non-co-operation campaign." Thereafter, ignoring the tragic fate of the thousands

**1920. First
Non-co-operation
campaign.**

of Muhajarin who had been duped into starting a Hijrat to Afghanistan in 1920, and also the murder of Mr. Willoughby, I.C.S., by a Muslim fanatic who admitted that the agitation had incited him to perpetrate the deed, Mr. Gandhi, with the Ali brothers, devoted all his energies to the Khilafat movement. By the end of 1920, as we have already seen, he had completely captured the Congress organization. New items were added from time to time to his programme, which ranged from the resignation of titles and the non-payment of taxes to the boycott of law courts, Government schools and the reformed Councils. At various stages the scope of the movement itself was extended. In June, 1920, finding that he was assigning to it a complexion so predominantly Muslim that he was likely to lose part of his Hindu following, he had added to its objects the satisfaction of Hindu opinion in the matter of the Punjab disturbances. A little later the scope was further extended to cover the magic word "Swaraj."

**Swaraj. What did
it mean ?**

To this word at that time Mr. Gandhi carefully refrained from assigning any precise meaning. To some it represented Mr. Gandhi's own idea of government of the self; others

1918-1922

read into it dominion home rule ; to another party it represented complete independence ; yet others interpreted it as Muslim supremacy. Above all, to the masses it shortly became synonymous with the commencement of a golden age, when prices should fall, when taxation should cease, when each man should be free from all State fetters, free to do that which he would with his own—and his wealthier neighbour's—property. At the Calcutta session of the Congress in September 1920 Mr. Gandhi proclaimed that his campaign of non-co-operation would win Swaraj in a year through the "Triple Boycott" of Government Schools, Law Courts and Legislative Councils. The date of attainment had subsequently to be postponed until October 30th, 1921, and then to December 31st, 1921, and at the end of that period he pessimistically declared that "he could fix no date."

This then was the atmosphere in which the reformed Councils met in February 1921.

1921. Violent results of non-co-operation.

In March, 1921, to the extreme consternation of many of his followers, particularly in the Muslim section, Mr. Gandhi announced that the spinning wheel was the key to Swaraj and Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal promptly washed his hands of a movement which professed to find India's freedom "at the point of the spindle." Apart, however, from these more peaceful aspects of the non-co-operation movement, Mr. Gandhi pressed forward in other directions, sublimely confident in his power to control the whirlwind he was sowing. The Congress and Khilafat volunteers had been amalgamated into a single body of National volunteers ; and these organizations spread themselves over the countryside, inspiring rustics only a shade more credulous than themselves with contempt for constituted authority. The tale of disorders grew. The calendar year 1921 saw no fewer than 60 outbreaks of varying seriousness in different parts of India. In May, 1921, Mr. Gandhi saw Lord Reading, who had recently arrived as Viceroy, and a few days later the Ali brothers published their famous apology for the

violence of their speeches. The effect, however, was short-lived. At the Khilafat conference at Karachi in July, 1921, the two brothers indulged in a violence of language which exceeded all their previous efforts

**Arrest of Ali
Brothers.**

Muslim unity; Hindu sentiment was becoming exercised by the intolerance of the Khilafat agitation;

Moplah Rebellion.

and they were arrested, tried and convicted under the ordinary law. Meanwhile further rents had been appearing in the fabric of Hindu-Muslim unity; Hindu sentiment was becoming exercised by the intolerance of the Khilafat agitation; and at that moment, in August, 1921, broke out the Moplah rebellion—the revolt of an ignorant and fanatical people undoubtedly engineered by the preachings of Hindu as well as Muslim agitators, a revolt which soon turned against the Hindu community and resulted in the sacking of Hindu temples, the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam and the death of many innocent persons. It was this tragic outbreak that did more than anything to wreck the facade of Hindu-Muslim unity which Mr. Gandhi's adoption of the Muslim cause had for the time erected.

In the earlier stages of the non-co-operation movement Government had taken no direct action against its more peaceful manifestations and had

**Government's
policy towards
non-co-operation.**

trusted (in vain as the result proved) to its condemnation by sane public opinion. There were many eminent Indians who from the outset saw its dangers, but Mr. Gandhi's influence was too strong. Mr. Gandhi himself was not blind to the possible results. At a comparatively early stage, after the memorable tour of the Khilafat mission through the Punjab, Sind and Madras, he wrote:—"Our popular demonstrations are unquestionably mob demonstrations. * * * All the same there is mobocracy. You are at the mercy of the mob. So long as there is sympathy between you and the mob, everything goes well. Immediately that cord is broken, there is horror." Nevertheless not even the Moplah rebellion deterred him from his chosen path. His Royal Highness the

Visit of Prince of Wales. Prince of Wales was due to arrive in Bombay on November 17th, 1921. At the beginning of the month the

All-India Congress Committee authorized every Province to commence civil disobedience—that is to say active opposition, as opposed to passive resistance, to certain laws—and the movement was fixed to begin in Bardoli on November 23rd under Mr. Gandhi's personal direction. The Royal arrival was marred by a disgraceful outbreak of rioting in which 53 persons were killed and approximately 400 wounded. Mr. Gandhi was shaken ; the civil disobedience movement was postponed ; and Government announced its determination to take more active steps against the campaign of non-co-operation and the National Volunteers. Even this, however, did not deter Mr. Gandhi. Perhaps he had gone too far to restrain the more extreme among his followers ; perhaps he underestimated the Government's strength.

In January, 1922, Sir C. Sankaran Nair presided unsuccessfully over a conference designed to bring about a settlement between Government and the non-co-operators. Mr. Gandhi was unyielding.

1922. Civil Disobedience, Bardoli At the beginning of February, 1922, he addressed an ultimatum to the Viceroy, declaring that a cam-

campaign of civil disobedience had been forced on his party in order to secure the elementary rights of free speech, free association and a free press—rights which the position he was even then occupying proved him to have exploited continuously, and enjoyed without intermission, from the outset of his movement. The Government of India retorted by a solemn warning that mass civil disobedience, if adopted, would be met with measures of sternness and severity. Mr. Gandhi, driven to his last resource, was on the point of launching the civil disobedience campaign in Bardoli, when there occurred at Chauri Chaura in the U. P. on February 4th the deliberate murder of 21 police-

Chauri Chaura. men and rural watchmen by a mob of volunteers and infuriated peasantry. Outrages as serious as that of Chauri Chaura had

occurred several times in the preceding months without in the least affecting his programme. But on this occasion he took a step which would seem to show that he had always regarded civil disobedience as dangerous, and now knew it to be hopeless. At a meeting of the Working Committee held at Bardoli on 11th and 12th February, 1922, he suspended mass civil disobedience

Suspension of Civil Disobedience.

forthwith and instructed his followers to abandon every preparation of an offensive nature. Fierce internal dissensions broke out between those in the Congress party who saw in

Mr. Gandhi's latest pronouncement a confession of complete failure and those who were convinced that it was only necessary to persevere under his guidance until all his aims were realized.

At this moment the Government of India once more laid before His Majesty's Government their conviction of the intensity of feeling in India regarding the necessity for a revision of the Turkish Peace Treaty (The Treaty of Sevres). The publication of the document containing these views produced a great effect upon the Muslim community, many of whom saw that there was more to be gained by supporting Government in its honest efforts than by adherence to the hitherto infructuous schemes of Mr. Gandhi. A few days later the All-India Congress Committee met at Delhi to confirm the Bardoli resolutions. Mr. Gandhi's personal ascendancy even over his immediate followers was severely taxed. He was successful in securing the confirmation of the Bardoli ban against mass civil disobedience ; but was compelled to accept the position that individual civil disobedience, whether defensive or aggressive, might still be commenced by permission of the Provincial Congress Committee. Plainly mass civil disobedience was only postponed ; it had not been repudiated. No one could say when Mr. Gandhi's hands might be forced by the more impetuous sections of his followers. The

Gandhi's first arrest.

Government of India decided to order Mr. Gandhi's arrest, which took place on March 10th, 1922. His trial

passed off with complete tranquillity and he was

1918-1922

sentenced to six years' simple imprisonment. Mr. Gandhi pleaded guilty and in the course of his speech he said :—

“ I wish to endorse all the blame that the Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurrences, the Madras occurrences and the Chauri Chaura occurrences. Thinking over these things deeply and sleeping over them night after night and examining my heart, I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolic crimes of Chauri Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. He is quite right when he says that, as a man of responsibility, a man having received a fair share of education, having had a fair share of experience of this world, I should know the consequences of every one of my acts. I knew this. I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk *and if I were set free I would still do the same.*” (The italics are ours.)

CHAPTER III

1922-1927

The five and a half years from Mr. Gandhi's first imprisonment in March, 1922, to the announcement of the Simon Commission in November, 1927, form the next compartment of our subject. Although less spectacularly eventful than the preceding four years, they contain developments of particular interest from the political and constitutional points of view.

Mr. Gandhi remained in jail until February 5th, 1924, when he was released after a successful operation for appendicitis, but for some years after that, apart from a few notable appearances on the

**1922-24. Gandhi's
release and
semi-retirement.**

public stage, he remained in comparative retirement. It was not until the end of 1928 that he fully resumed his position as the stormy petrel of Indian politics. In the interval the focus of political activity shifted from the countryside to the legislatures. In spite of Mr. Gandhi's ban on "Council entry," the general elections at the end of 1923 saw the return of a strong Congress contingent (the Swaraj Party) to the Central Legislative Assembly. Once Mr. Gandhi, as the leader of unconstitutional obstruction, had left the

**Growth of
Co-operation.**

centre of the political stage, his place was taken by Mr. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the latter at least as the leader of a constitutional "opposition." Further, although the Congress representatives entered the legislatures with the declared object of "wrecking the Reforms," the all-important fact remains that, except in the Central Provinces and Bengal, they did not do so, but stayed to work them in a constitutional manner. Indeed, in due course dissensions arose in the Swaraj Party itself, which ended in the formation of a new Party, containing important Swarajists and pledged to a programme of Responsive Co-operation; and it was only the announcement of the

1922-1927

Simon Commission in 1927 that revived in full the forces of obstruction.

Non-co-operation left behind it two fatal legacies. As a political campaign it had proved a failure, but as an attitude of mind it survived ; and throughout this period the impartial observer cannot fail to note the frustration it brought about. There was always a "no change" party of Mr. Gandhi's devoted adherents ; Mr. Gandhi him-

Aftermath of Non- Co-operation.

self was still a leader who could not be offended ; and those who in their heart of hearts profoundly disagreed with his methods had continually to be looking over their shoulders to avoid the loss of their political reputations which any suspicion of active co-operation with Government, in however good a cause, was always liable to bring about. This was a fear that affected alike the Liberal, the Independent and many members of the Swaraj Party itself.

The second legacy of non-co-operation was communal discord. "Mr. Gandhi's campaign had roused the uneasy spirit ; and this in two ways. On the negative side, since he laboured strenuously

Growth of Communal Discord.

to depress the authority of the State, Mr. Gandhi weakened the one power in India which can lead men to rise above communal considerations. * * * On the positive side, the effect was even more grave. Mr. Gandhi, in identifying himself with extreme Muslim contention over the Khilafat question, endeavoured to exploit, in pursuit of internal political ends, and assert, the solidarity between Indian Musalmans and Islam outside India. For Muslims and Hindus alike Mr. Gandhi's motto was "religion above all things." He taught that the existing Government was satanic ; that the dictates of a creed were uncompromising and irrevocable. Sectarian passion rose high, in the first instance, against the Government. But the terrible Moplah outbreak revealed to the Hindus a danger which they had only temporarily forgotten. The political entente between the two communities weakened. From

events external to India it received its death blow. Peace between Turkey and the Allies was made effective on accepted terms ; and not long after, the Turks first deprived their Sultan-Khalifa of all civil power, and then abolished the Khilafat entirely. The spirit of aggression, which had been so wantonly roused among the Mussalmans, was suddenly deprived of its anti-Government bias. Plainly Mr. Gandhi had not helped the Khilafat cause, since, despite his aid, the very institution on whose behalf so much sentiment had been aroused was now destroyed. A reaction set in. The Indian Mussalmans turned their eyes from foreign to domestic questions. What they saw alarmed them. They numbered 70 millions ; nonetheless they were in a minority as compared with the Hindus. Further, while they cherished militant traditions and the memories of an Empire in India, they were now inferior in education, in wealth and in vested interests to their rivals. How then would they fare when Swaraj were attained ? The communal anxiety increased rapidly, and they put forward claims which, by turn, exasperated and alarmed the Hindus. Before long the situation clearly crystallised. The Mussalmans would not advance one step towards the acquisition of Swaraj until their future was secured. Since Mr. Gandhi had inculcated the doctrine that a man's religion is all that matters, since he had execrated and despised secular authority, the Mussalmans naturally fell back upon the dictates of their own militant creed. This attitude was necessarily reflected by the Hindus, now fully alive to the horrors perpetrated in the name of Islam by the Moplahs. The real significance of Mr. Gandhi's policy for the first time became apparent. Blind to the lessons of history, he had taught men, while exalting God, to despise Caesar. But in India, as it has been well said, "Caesar is one, while God is worshipped in many forms, whose adherents dwell in mutual toleration only through Caesar's constraint. Inevitably, therefore, Mr. Gandhi's doctrine brought not peace, but a sword to his luckless country." (India 1924-25, page 299.)

The period under review in this chapter saw the first revival of the Muslim League under the leadership of

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Mr. Jinnah ; and the emergence of the Hindu Mahasabha as a frankly communal party ; it saw too many attempts at reconciliation between the great communities —Unity Conferences and a fast by Mr. Gandhi ; but it witnessed also a great increase in communal dissensions and an ever-growing tale of Hindu-Muslim riots.

1922. Gaya Congress. Gandhi's influence persists.

After Mr. Gandhi's arrest the great non-co-operation movement, which had seemed on the point of razing the very foundations of law and order, dissolved within a few short months into a welter of conflicting interests and divided councils. At the meeting of the Congress and Khilafat committees at Lucknow in June, 1922, and again at the Gaya Congress at the end of the year Mr. Gandhi's influence still predominated ; it was agreed that the constructive programme must be pursued ; an attempt to allow Congress members to enter the legislature was defeated ; and the " no changers " still held the field. But the Congress leaders who had conducted a " Civil Disobedience Enquiry " had agreed unanimously that mass civil disobedience was quite impossible throughout the country at large ; and the All-India Congress Committee failed to come to any conclusion upon their Report after five days' heated discussion.

On January 1st, 1923, the revolt began by an announcement by Mr. C. R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr. Ajmal Khan and certain other prominent leaders that they had constituted a new

1923. Council entry. Birth of Swaraj Party.

Khilafat-Swarajya Party, within the Congress, for the conversion of their opponents to a change in the non-co-operation programme. Meanwhile the National Liberal Federation under the Right Honourable Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, and a conference convened by Mrs. Besant under the presidency of Sir

Tej Bahadur Sapru had been discussing constructive programmes of constitutional advance ; and there was the fact that the legislature had produced a solid record of achievement which could not be ignored. It had succeeded within two years in repealing the Press Acts and many "repressive laws"; in altering the fiscal policy ; in securing effective retrenchment ; and in opening the way for the nationalization of the railways and the Indianization of the Army. Throughout 1923 the Swarajists steadily gained ground at the expense of the no-change party. The famous certification of the salt tax in the budget for 1923-24, however necessary that step may have been, had undoubtedly dismayed the majority of the Liberal Party and afforded additional stimulus to the propaganda of the Swaraj Party, which announced that the machinery of the Councils constituted a powerful instrument of repression in the hands of the authorities which must be captured at all costs. During the early summer of 1923, the national flag movement conducted by the no-changers at Nagpur formed a brief interlude, but failed to attract attention for any length of time. As the elections of November

Second Assembly elections.

1923 approached the Liberals were at their weakest ; the "no-change" party was losing ground ; and the Swarajists were consolidating their position. At the end of August Mr. Mohammad Ali had been released from jail. On September 25th a special meeting of the Congress was held at Delhi, in the course of which Mr. Mohammad Ali announced that he had received a telepathic message from Mr. Gandhi in the Yeravda Jail approving of the modification of the

Modification of triple boycott.

triple boycott in favour of council entry. With all the advantages they enjoyed, it was surprising that the Swaraj candidates at the elections were not returned in greater numbers. Only in the Central Provinces did they enjoy a clear majority over all parties. In Bengal they represented the strongest individual group ; and in the Central Legislative Assembly they counted 45 adherents out of a total strength of some 140 members. Their victory

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at the polls was, however, a real one, inasmuch as it enabled them to displace their moderate rivals as the exponents of the political ideals of the Indian intelligentsia. At the end of 1923 the annual session of Congress at Coconada managed to avoid an open split between the Swarajists and Mr. Gandhi's adherents; but a proposal to alter the Congress creed in such a manner as to lay down complete independence as the goal to be achieved was discountenanced by the majority of the leaders present. Although the triple boycott, which included the boycott of councils, was formally reaffirmed, the Swaraj Party took its place in the Assembly a few weeks later; but it was laid down that no member of the party was to accept

Congress enter the Assembly.

office or to offer himself as a candidate for select committees. In the Central Provinces the Swarajist leaders pursued true "wrecking" tactics; they refused to accept office as Ministers and proceeded to vote down every Government measure. The Governor was thereupon obliged to put into operation the emergency powers conferred upon him by the constitution in order to carry on the administration. His powers were limited to providing those funds on the transferred side which were considered indispensable for carrying on the essential functions of a civilised Government and all schemes of development or new expenditure were, therefore, held in abeyance. In Bengal the Swarajists formed a coalition which carried on the administration for some time, but eventually in this Province also the Governor was compelled to dispense with a ministry.

Any account of the year 1923 would be incomplete without a reference to the communal disorders by which it was marred.

Communal Riots.

In March and April there were open riots of a serious nature in Amritsar, Multan and in other parts of the Punjab. In May there were further riots at Amritsar and a riot in Sind. In June and July there were riots in Moradabad and Meerut, as well as in the Allahabad district of the United Provinces, and a somewhat serious disturbance at Ajmer. In August and September there were further

outbreaks of a distressing character at Amritsar, Panipat, Jubbulpore, Gonda, Agra and Rai Bareilly. Most serious of all was a disturbance which occurred at Saharanpur in connection with the Moharram festival. In addition apprehension was caused in Mussalman quarters by the Shuddhi movement, which had as its object the reclamation of certain communities to Hinduism. During the last three months of the year prominent Congressmen devoted much attention to the task of healing communal dissensions. Wherever riots occurred, individual leaders hastened to employ their personal influence in the cause of agreement; but the age-long antagonism between the two faiths had now attained proportions which were beyond the power of any individual to compose. At the Delhi Congress a small committee was nominated to prepare the draft of a "National Pact". Subsequently Mr. C. R. Das and certain of his friends drew up what was known as the "Bengal Pact", but it at once roused a storm of opposition among Hindus of every complexion. The Coconada conference considered both these pacts but no final agreement was reached.

In the Central Assembly in February, 1924, the first item of importance was a resolution by Mr. Rangachari recommending the Governor-General in Council to take steps to revise the Government of India Act in such a manner

**1924. The
Rangachari
Resolution.**

as to secure for India provincial autonomy in the Provinces and full self-governing dominion status within the Empire. The Swaraj Party formed a coalition with the Independents, which was known as the Nationalist Party, and carried an amendment moved by Pandit Motilal Nehru which called for the convening of a round table conference to recommend a scheme

**Pandit Motilal
Nehru. Birth of
the Round Table
Conference Idea.**

for the establishment of full responsible Government in India. In the course of his speech he explained that his party had come to the legislature to offer their co-operation. If the Government would receive this co-operation, they would find that the Swarajists

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were their men. If not, the Swarajists would stand on their rights and continue to be non-co-operators. It was at this juncture, as already noted, that Mr. Gandhi was released from jail on February 5th, 1924. For

Release of Gandhi.

some time he was too weak to familiarize himself with the intricacies of current politics ; but before long (so much for telepathy) he published a letter, to the embarrassment of the Swarajist leaders, expressing his adherence to the original plan of the triple boycott. They approached him with a request to allow them to continue as members of the Central and Local Legislatures pending his final decision on the question of council entry ; and Mr. Gandhi, influenced by the fact that he had not fully regained his health, consented.

Early in the summer of 1924 conversations were resumed between Mr. Gandhi and the Swarajist leaders ; and in June he published a declaration to the effect that the Swarajists, since they did not accept the boycotts, ought not to retain their

Gandhi versus Swaraj Party.

office on the Executive of the Indian National Congress. Meanwhile in the special session of the legislature held in May and June, the Swaraj Party actively supported the bill for the protection of the steel industry and made a further departure from their old principles by agreeing to serve on select and standing committees. In these circumstances great interest was displayed in the meeting of the Working Committee at Ahmedabad on June the 27th, where battle was joined between Mr. Gandhi and the Swaraj Party. Mr. Gandhi had tabled a number of resolutions, including one which called upon every member of the Congress Committee to spin two thousand yards of yarn every month as a condition of the retention of his office, and another calling upon all persons not accepting the boycotts to resign from the All-India Congress Committee. At the meeting itself Mr. Gandhi found that, although he would be able to carry the resolutions by a small majority, opinion in the country

was against him ; and the result was a series of compromises which eliminated the penal clauses from his resolutions. Early in July he publicly announced that he had been defeated and humbled. His wish, he said, was to retire from the

Gandhi's defeat. Congress and to confine his activity to Hindu-Muslim unity, khaddar and untouchability. But he reluctantly agreed to remain in the Congress organization and proposed that the Congress should concentrate on the three objects mentioned above. This did not suit the Swarajists' book, but Mr. Gandhi remained firm. Unless his plans were accepted, he said, he would leave the Congress to the Swarajists and start a separate organization of his own.

Meanwhile communal disturbances had continued.

Communal Riots. In July 1924 severe fighting broke out between Hindus and Muhammadans in Delhi. In the same month there was a bad outbreak at Nagpur. August was even worse. There were riots at Lahore, at Lucknow, at Moradabad, at Bhagalpur and at Nagpur in British India ; while a severe affray took place at Gulbarga in the Nizam's dominion. September and October saw severe fighting at Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Kankanarah and Allahabad. The most terrible outbreak of all, which was followed by an exodus of the entire Hindu population, took place at Kohat.

It was against this background that Mr. Gandhi declared on September 1st, 1924, that he

Gandhi's penance fast. would fast for three weeks in penance for the responsibility which he himself acknowledged for the manner in which his campaign had fomented bitter feelings. At the moment Mr. Gandhi's stock was undoubtedly low ; and it is a significant fact that this was always the case on each subsequent occasion when he staged a major fast. A week later, on

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September 26th, 1924, the famous Unity Conference met in Delhi to find a solution of the communal difficulty and was attended by Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Sikhs and Christians. Amongst other things the conference set up an All-India Panchayat of fifteen persons, whose task it was to appoint local conciliation committees. Unfortunately, the Unity Conference produced little practical result and the All-India Panchayat hardly functioned.

Delhi Unity Conference.

On October 25th, 1924, Lord Reading promulgated what was popularly known as the Bengal Ordinance, which established a summary procedure for the arrest and trial of persons whose object was revolutionary crime. Among those arrested were certain members of the Swaraj Party in Bengal, including the Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation. The Swaraj Party took advantage of the agitation that ensued to claim that they were the target of repressive action on the part of Government, and they thus succeeded in reaching an agreement with Mr. Gandhi which laid down the necessity of reuniting all groups in opposition to the new repressive policy; recommended the formal suspension of the programme of non-co-operation (except in so far as it related to the refusal to use foreign cloth); and authorised the Swarajist Party to carry on work in the legislature on behalf of the Congress and as an integral part of the Congress organization. By this agreement the Swarajists gained a decisive victory over Mr. Gandhi and their success

Progress of Swaraj Party.

encouraged them to summon an All-Party Leaders' Conference. The Liberals, the Independents, and the adherents of Mrs. Besant's National Home Rule League joined this conference in Bombay on November 21st, but it was found almost impossible to arrive at any substantial agreement. A committee was appointed, which subsequently met in January and February, 1925, and resolved itself into two sub-committees to deal respectively with Hindu-Muslim differences and with a scheme for constitutional advance. The first sub-com-

All-Party Conference.

mittee found agreement impossible and dispersed. The second resulted in little more than suggesting certain alterations in Mrs. Besant's draft "Commonwealth of India Bill." At the end of the year 1924 the Congress met at Belgaum, the Muslim League in Bombay and the Liberal Federation in Lucknow. The Congress formally adopted the Pact between Mr. Gandhi and the Swarajists; the Muslim League definitely resolved that it would not merge itself into the Congress; the Liberal League, under Dr. Paranjpye, condemned the non-co-operation movement and outlined a programme of work for the acquisition of responsible Government on dominion lines.

Early in 1925 the Swarajists in Bengal rejected the Bill which was necessitated by the approaching expiry of the Bengal Ordinance, and it had to be certified by the Governor. There was, however, beginning to arise in the country at large a general weariness of political agitation in every shape and form; and there were those in the Swaraj Party itself who began to voice doubts. Only in two Provinces had it been able to bring dyarchy to an end and elsewhere its achievements in the legislatures did not appear to differ substantially from those for which the Liberals had received so little credit. Accordingly the suggestion began to take shape that the party should take office and "wreck from within". In the Central Legislature, the coalition between the Swarajists and the Independents, which was referred to above, had broken down. Mr. Jinnah was now the leader of a separate Independent Party and there was a growing tendency on the part of the different groups in the Legislature to register their votes on the merits of each case and no longer to record them automatically against all Government proposals. The tone and temper of the debates were admirable and although there was plenty of hard hitting on both sides of the house, acid speeches were rare and good humour was conspicuous in the handling of the thorniest questions. It was during the Delhi session of 1925 that the report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, generally known as the

**1925. Prelude
to responsive
Co-operation.**

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Muddiman Report, was published, together with the announcement, which created great interest, that Lord Reading had been invited to England to confer with the new Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead. At the same time other constitutional projects were also in the field. A reference has already been made to Mrs. Besant's Bill, which was published early in 1925 and which was finally adopted by a convention under the chairmanship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at Cawnpore early in April.

The year 1925 was, indeed, a year of constitutional progress against a background of continuing communal strife. It saw the emergence of the principle of "responsive co-operation"; the acceptance of office by more than one distinguished member

Acceptance of office

of the Swarajist Party; and the defection from that party of several of its most important leaders. In August Dr. Suhrawardy, who had been narrowly defeated in the election for the presidentship of the Bengal Legislative Council, resigned from the Swaraj Party after Mr. Gandhi had taken strong exception to his interviewing the Governor of Bengal. In the same month Mr. V. J. Patel was elected President of the Central Legislative Assembly and in appealing to the official benches for their co-operation in the discharge of his duties, announced his readiness to extend his co-operation to them. Early in October the leader of the Swarajist Party in the Central Provinces, Mr. S. B. Tambe, accepted the office of Executive Councillor in the Government of that Province. Other important resignations from the Swarajist Party included Pandit M.

Defections from Swaraj Party.

M. Malaviya, Mr. M. R. Jayakar, Dr. Moonje and Mr. N. C. Kelkar. This, however, is looking slightly ahead. On May 1st, 1925, Mr. Gandhi had made an important speech in Calcutta in which he disclaimed all knowledge of the negotiations which at that time were said to be proceeding between Lord Birkenhead and Mr. C. R. Das. He preferred, he said, to concentrate on a constructive programme for developing the power

of India from within. The three essential items in this programme were :—

- (1) Hindu-Muslim unity ;
- (2) the removal of untouchability ; and
- (3) the use of the spinning wheel.

Gandhi and the constructive programme.

As regards the first of these he said :

“Is Hindu-Muslim unity unattainable by us? I have admitted my incompetence. * * I do not find that either Hindus or Mussalmans are prepared to accept my cure and therefore I simply nowadays confine myself to a passing mention of this problem and content myself by saying that some day or other we Hindus and Mussalmans will have to come together if we want the deliverance of our country ; and if it is to be our lot that, before we can come together, we must shed one another's blood, then I say the sooner we do so, the better it is for us. If we propose to break one another's heads, let us do it in a manly fashion.” Regarding untouchability he said: “So long as untouchability disfigures Hinduism, so long do I hold the attainment of Swaraj to be an utter impossibility. Supposing it were a gift sent from Downing Street to India, that gift would be a curse upon this land, if we do not get rid of this curse of untouchability.”

In marked contrast was Mr. C. R. Das's speech a few days later at Faridpur. Posing the question whether India should set before herself the ideal of independence within or without the British

C. R. Das supports the “Empire idea.”

Empire, he delivered a most remarkable verdict in favour of the former. “The Empire idea,” he said, “gives us a vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion status today is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance by consent of those who form part of the Empire for material advantages in the real spirit of co-operation. Free alliance necessarily carries with it the right of separation. Before the war, a

separatist tendency was growing up in several parts of the Empire, but after the war it is generally believed that it is only as a great confederation that the Empire or its component parts can live. It is realized that under modern conditions no nation can live in isolation, and dominion status, while it affords complete protection to each constituent comprising the great commonwealth of nations called the British Empire, secures to each the rights to realize itself, develop itself and fulfil itself; and therefore it expresses and implies all the elements of Swaraj which I have mentioned. To me the idea is specially attractive because of its deep spiritual significance. I believe in world peace, in the ultimate federation of the world; and I think that the great commonwealth of nations called the British Empire—a federation of diverse races, each with its distinct mental outlook, if properly led by statesmen at the helm, is bound to make a lasting contribution to the great problem that confronts the statesman, the problem of knitting the world into the greatest federation the mind can conceive, the federation of the human race. * * * I think it is for the good of India, for the good of the world, that India should strive for freedom within the Commonwealth and so serve the cause of humanity.” This utterance from one of India’s greatest nationalists reads strangely in the light of the denunciations of Empire to which we are accustomed today.

C. R. Das’s death. Mr. Das’s death a few weeks later on June 16th, 1925, was in more ways than one a national calamity.

Lord Birkenhead’s announcement on Constitutional Reform. On July 7th, 1925, Lord Birkenhead made his long expected pronouncement in the House of Lords. No final decisions, he said, had been taken as a result of his discussions with Lord Reading. Before any constitutional changes could be made, the Legislative Assembly would have to be consulted; but revision of the constitution before the period laid down by the Act depended on the creation of certain conditions. The Reforms had neither altogether succeeded, nor had altogether failed, although Indian leaders had

abused and defamed them and the most highly organized party in India had deliberately set out to destroy them. The constitution would undoubtedly require revision after ten years, when everything would be thrown into the melting pot. Meanwhile, the Government could not accept the report of the minority of the Muddiman Committee, which had suggested the setting up of an immediate round table conference ; but action would be taken as far as possible on the majority report after receiving the views of the Government of India and the Legislative Assembly. The reception of this speech in India was not as favourable as might have been expected. There was impatience at the delay implied, but few persons stopped to consider what party in India was responsible for it. In July, 1925, Colonel Wedgwood, a staunch supporter of Indian nationalism, put the point bluntly in an English Labour Newspaper :—

“ How can we help people who cannot make any definite proposal because they cannot agree on one ? As Mr. Satyamurthi attacks me, let me tell him that I am coming to this reluctant conclusion, that he and his party are afraid of democracy ; that they are against the extension of the franchise, against the untouchable workers, against the starving tenants, against giving powers and responsibility to the common people of India. As their money comes from the landlords and capitalists, they are afraid. They want themselves to govern India ; they do not want the common people of India to govern themselves. If this is not so, let them drop their tomfool non-co-operation and tell us exactly what they need to make real freedom safe.”

Before the end of July the Swaraj Party and the Working Committee of Congress met in Calcutta. Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Jayakar and Mr. Patel were all present. After a prolonged discussion the relevant resolution declared that the meeting endorsed the offer of honourable co-operation with the Govern-

**Hostile reaction
of Congress.**

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ment and the conditions thereof laid down in Mr. Das's Faridpur speech, but regretted that the pronouncement of the Secretary of State was calculated to render the chances of honourable co-operation difficult, if not impossible. There should, therefore, be no revision of the policy of the Swaraj Party, but it would be prepared to consider the matter if the final declaration to be made by the Government of India was found to be at all adequate to meet the requirements of the existing situation in the country. Carefully read this resolution was far from being an uncompromising reaffirmation of the old Swarajist policy. One immediate and most important result was that Mr. Gandhi placed the whole

Swaraj Party's control of Congress machinery.

machinery of the Congress at the disposal of Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Swarajist leader, and announced that the Congress need no longer be predominantly a spinning association. When the Assembly met in Simla in August, 1925, the main business was the debate on the report of the Muddiman Committee, when Sir Alexander

Debate on Muddiman Report.

Muddiman himself, as Home Member, moved that the principles underlying the majority report should be accepted. An amendment by Pandit Motilal Nehru recommended that immediate steps should be taken to move His Majesty's Government to make a declaration in Parliament embodying such fundamental changes in the constitutional machinery and administration of India as would make the Government of the country fully responsible. The amendment further recommended the holding of a round table conference at an early date. After two days' discussion the amendment was carried against the Government by 72 votes to 45.

Outside the legislature, after the Simla session, the defections from the Swarajist Party

Dissension in Swaraj Party.

already referred to led to a meeting of the Executive of the party at Nagpur under Pandit Motilal Nehru on November 1st, at which he endeavoured to explain

away the significance of the revolt; but the tide was clearly rising against him. A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Berar Swaraj Party on October 26th declared that in their opinion the time had come for the Swaraj Party to adopt the policy of responsive co-operation. From the Central Provinces Pandit Motilal Nehru had to hurry to Bombay to meet the revolt there led by Mr. Jayakar and Mr. Kelkar; and it was in this atmosphere that the annual session of the Indian National Congress met at Cawnpore on December 24th, 1925, under the presidency of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Her presidential speech did nothing to close the rift between Pandit Motilal Nehru and his chief antagonists and it was left to the Pandit himself to move the main resolution, which proposed that, failing a satisfactory response from the Government to the Assembly's famous resolution of February 1924 on constitutional reforms (moved by Mr. Ranga-chari), the Swarajist members should leave their seats in the legislature and not attend meetings except to prevent their seats from being declared vacant. This resolution was eventually carried. Mr. Gandhi entirely abstained from taking part in the discussions, thus signifying his complete withdrawal from an active share in politics. On December 31st a meeting of leading Indian politicians took place in Calcutta to further the cause of responsive co-operation.

The year 1926 brought few fresh developments either in the political or the communal fields. Indeed, for the purposes of this review, it might be almost sufficient to record the fact that Mr. Gandhi's name finds no mention in the lengthy annual report for the year 1926-27 which the Government of India prepared for presentation to Parliament.

On January 20th, 1926, the Delhi session of the Assembly commenced and on March 8th Pandit Motilal Nehru rose to make his final speech to the house on

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the conclusion of which he walked out with all his followers. The President declared that as the strongest party had vacated the chamber, the Assembly ceased to retain its representative character and warned the Government not to introduce any controversial legislation, as otherwise he might be forced to adjourn the Assembly *sine die*. This statement was revised the next day and the business of the house continued. Indeed the "walk out" of March 8th fell flat; further important defections took place inside the party;

Birth of National Party.

and on April 3rd a conference took place in Bombay at which it was hoped to form a new National Party composed of Responsivists, Independents and Moderates. A number of important leaders attended and after two days' deliberation an Indian National Party was formed to prepare for and accelerate the establishment of Swaraj, or full responsible Government of India, such as obtained in the self-governing dominions of the British Empire, with due provision for the protection of the rights and interests of minorities and the backward and depressed classes. The new party also decided to make arrangements for fighting the next elections, which were due at the end of 1926. The formation of this party was, of course, a challenge to the Swarajists, and there followed a meeting of the Swaraj Party at

The Sabarmati Pact.

Sabarmati on April 21st, which was attended by Mr. Gandhi himself. Attempts to heal the breaches that had arisen resulted in what came to be known as the Sabarmati Pact; but this Pact was given widely different interpretations by different persons and in the recriminations that ensued it soon became obvious that the split between the Swarajists and the Responsivists had become

Swarajists vs. Responsivists.

more clearly pronounced than ever. The door of the Congress, instead of being opened to let in the Liberals, had been closed against all but the diehard Swarajists; but the matter was left over (as usual) until the next annual meeting of Congress in December, 1926.

Lord Reading left India and Lord Irwin arrived at the beginning of April, 1926; and the latter's first public pronouncement of importance at the Chelmsford Club in Simla on July 17th was an impressive appeal for communal unity. Nevertheless, including

Lord Irwin's arrival and appeal for communal unity.

the two prolonged outbursts of rioting in Calcutta during April and May, 1926, no less than 40 riots took place during the twelve months ending with April 1st, 1927, resulting in the death of 197 persons and injuries more or less severe to 1,598 others. There was also the spectacular case of the murder of Swami Shradanand by a Mohammadan fanatic on December 23rd. At the end of the year efforts were made by a group of influential Mohammadan gentlemen to revise the famous Lucknow Pact of December, 1916, which had laid down the existing system of communal electorates; but these efforts failed. Meanwhile, in the political field, it is worth recording that the Swaraj Party, after their walk-out in Delhi, returned for a brief period to the Legislative Assembly during the autumn session of 1926 in Simla.

Speaking generally, it could be said that the Legislatures set up by the Act of 1919, and particularly the Central Legislature, had by now established their prestige over the various political and quasi-political organizations which had once competed with them for popular attention and esteem. The general elections with which

1927. Third Assembly elections.

the year concluded entirely overshadowed the annual meeting of Congress at Gauhati in December, 1926. In the elections themselves the Swarajist Party lost some ground. Only in Madras was there a swing over from the success of the non-Brahmins at the previous election; and when the new, or third, Assembly met in Delhi on January 24th, 1927, the Swaraj Party, or, as its members hereafter preferred to call it, the Congress Party, counted only 40 out of a total of 104 elected

Swarajists.

members. Apart from the non-official European group,

1922-1927

there was no other party in existence, but after a few days nearly all the Hindu elected members of the Assembly who did not belong to the Swaraj Party formed themselves into a "Nationalist Party" under the leader-

ship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mr. Jayakar and Lala Lajpat Rai. The old Independent Party

which, under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah, had played such an important part in the previous Assembly, practically disappeared. Both the composition and the grouping of the Legislative Assembly thus faithfully reflected the two strongest forces at work in Indian politics at this time—the movement towards constitutional methods and the communal antagonism which cut across all other lines of political division.

During the course of the Delhi session the Home Member, Sir Alexander Muddiman, had occasion to refer to criticisms of the use of the special powers provided by the constitution in a speech which is worth quoting at some length in view of the bearing it has on the main theme of this review. "The proposition" he said "that the will of the Legislature has to be carried out by the Executive is one which is

Use of Special Powers.

only true where the constitution is such that the Legislature and the Executive are in harmony; they are in harmony in ordinary parliamentary institutions owing to the fact that under those constitutions, if you turn out my honourable friend and myself, you have got to sit in our places; the King's Government has got to go on. The real answer to the criticisms which are directed at this constitution, and rightly directed at it, namely, those concerned with the existence of residuary powers, is that they are justified by the fact that there must be some authority to bring the Executive and the Legislature into conformity. No constitution and no country can be run where the Legislature is in permanent conflict with the Executive; something has got to break somewhere." He went on to point out "the more you force on a Government constituted as we are the exercise of these residuary powers, the more you weaken yourselves and the more you weaken us. You will come to regard

that as a normal course in order to exercise your control over the Government." He concluded with the weighty observation that, in other constitutions, progress is possible by the atrophy of the residuary power and not by its stimulation through constant use.

The outstanding event of the year 1927 was the appointment of the Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon, which was announced in Parliament, and simultaneously by the Viceroy in India, on November 8th, 1927, and which

**Appointment of
Simon
Commission.**

forms the starting point of the third main stage of this review. Throughout this year, as in the preceding twelve months, Mr. Gandhi held aloof from politics. Further attempts were made during the summer to pursue the question of the revision of the Cawnpore Pact, which has already been referred to, and to lay down the conditions on which joint electorates might be accepted by the Mohammadan community ; there was a Unity

**The Communal
Problem.**

Conference in Simla in September and another in Calcutta in October, held under the auspices of the All-India Congress Committee ; the Congress itself at its annual session passed what was known as the " Unity Resolution " ; and finally there was the " All-Parties Conference " at Delhi in February, 1928. No practical progress was however made towards the settlement of the Communal problem and the last named Conference broke up after appointing a committee to pursue the matter.

This chapter may fittingly conclude with a reference to the Resolution of the Congress at its annual meeting in December, 1927, declaring that the goal of the Indian people was complete national inde-

Jawaharlal Nehru.

pendence. It marked the re-entry on to the Indian political stage of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who had recently arrived from Russia, for it was he who moved the Resolution. For the time being the Resolution fell flat and shortly afterwards his father declared that his goal was 'dominion status for India.

CHAPTER IV

1927-1935

With this chapter in our review we are approaching events which will still be fresh in the memory of many of our readers and in any case it will be necessary to compress our narrative if we are to reproduce within any reasonable compass an account of these eight crowded years.

The immediate result of the announcement of the Simon Commission on November 8th, 1927, was a rapprochement between the extreme left and the extreme right of Indian politics in common denunciation of the constitution of the Commission and its procedure. The criticism was, of course, based primarily on the fact that the Commission consisted entirely of members of Parliament and contained no Indians. The immediate suggestion was that the Commission should be boycotted. As time went on, the attitude of certain parties became more reasonable and, speaking generally, those that represented minorities began to favour the idea of co-operation with the Commission. Mohammadan opinion was divided and the result was that Mr. Jinnah and his supporters, who had declared for the boycott of the Commission, held one annual meeting in Calcutta, while Sir Mohammad Shafi and a number of those who took the less extreme view held another meeting in Lahore. The Congress, of course, at its annual meeting declared for the boycott of the Commission "at every stage and in every form."

It was in this atmosphere that the Delhi session of the Legislature began on February 1st, 1928. In his address to the Central Legislature on February 2nd, His Excellency the Viceroy made a striking appeal for co-operation with the Commission. On the next day the members of the Commission landed in Bombay. The hartal proclaimed

**1928. The
Commission
arrives in India.**

to welcome it was a disappointment to its promoters ; but in Madras and Calcutta regrettable hooliganism occurred. Sir John Simon and his colleagues arrived in Delhi on February 4th, where they were met by a rowdy demonstration, although a number of the demonstrators seemed to possess only a hazy idea of what they were there for and cheered Sir John as he drove away from the station. On February 6th he communicated to the Viceroy a lengthy letter, which was published the next day, in which he laid down the procedure that he proposed to follow. Briefly

**Method of Joint
Free Conference.**

his proposal was that the Commission should take the form of a "Joint Free Conference" over which he would preside and which would consist of the seven British Commissioners and corresponding bodies of representatives chosen by the Indian Legislatures. All the material prepared by the Government of India and the Provincial Governments for submission to the Commission and the evidence given in explanation or amplification of this material would come before the Joint Free Conference. The British Commissioners, who were solely responsible to Parliament, would necessarily submit a report of their own, but arrangements would be made by which the reports of the Joint Committee of the Central Legislature and of the separate committees of the various provincial Legislative Councils would also be made available to the British Parliament. If the Indian Joint Committee preferred it, he said that he would make its report an annexe to that of his own Commission. Within two or three hours of the publication of this lengthy letter the political leaders assembled in Delhi for the legislative session issued the following

**Congress
Opposition.**

statement :—" We have most carefully considered the line of procedure indicated in the statement of Sir John Simon issued today. But our objections to the Commission as constituted, and the scheme as announced, are based on principles which remain unaffected by it. In the circumstances we must adhere to our decision that we cannot have anything to do with the Commission at any stage or in

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any form." It was clear that these leaders had not had time fully to discuss so important a document and that their main object was to get something into the newspapers at the same time as Sir John Simon's proposals, so as to forestall their possibly favourable effect on public opinion.

On February 16th, 1928, a resolution was moved in the Legislative Assembly by Lala Lajpat Rai to the effect that the constitution and scheme of the Statutory Commission were wholly unacceptable to the house and that the Legislative Assembly would have nothing to do with the Commission at any stage or in any form. After two days' debate this resolution was finally carried by the narrow margin of 68 votes to 62. In the Council of State, a few days later a resolution was carried by 34 votes to 13 urging the Government of India to appoint a committee to co-operate with the Simon Commission. It need only

Provincial Co-operation.

be added that by the autumn of 1928 every Provincial Legislative Council in India, except that of the Central Provinces, had decided to appoint a committee of its own members to co-operate with the Statutory Commission.

During 1928-29 the Commission itself toured throughout India, receiving a hostile reception here and there, and on April 13th, 1929, it returned to England with the first stage of its task accomplished. Meanwhile political opinion throughout the year 1928 continued to be absorbed

Hindu-Muslim Relations.

by the two main questions of constitutional reform and Hindu-Muslim relations. The concluding six months of the year ending March 31st, 1928, had been almost free from communal disorders except for the violent riots which broke out in Bombay on February 2nd and lasted for about a fortnight. In these no fewer than 149 persons were killed and 739 injured. The rest of 1928 was comparatively peaceful. Apart from other reasons for this state of affairs the preoccupation of the leaders of the different communities with the issues

arising out of the enquiry of the Statutory Commission may well have been a contributory cause. Indeed, although there have been exceptions to this rule, it has often been noticeable how little disturbance of the peace there has been during periods when the communities were left to themselves and how frequently outbursts of communal feeling have coincided with periods of political agitation among the masses.

The committee appointed by the All-Parties Conference in February, 1928, met during the summer and after much discussion appointed a small sub-committee to

The Nehru Report.

determine the principles of a constitution for India and draft a report thereon, thus bringing together the two main questions which were agitating the public mind. The report was published in August, 1928, and bore eight signatures, including those of Pandit Motilal Nehru, leader of the Congress Party, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, leader of the Liberals, and Sir Ali Imam, at one time a Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council. It is important to bear this fact in mind, since the report subsequently became generally known as the "Nehru Report". The report itself was of great importance and was regarded by many as an answer to Lord Birkenhead's challenge to political India to produce a constitution which might gain the assent of all interests in the country. It was based on the principle of "dominion status". The All-Parties Conference met at Lucknow on August 28th to consider the report and difficulties soon arose from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's insistence that India's goal should be complete independence and not dominion status. The resolution finally passed by the Conference declared that "without restricting the liberty of action of those parties whose goal is complete independence, the form of government to be established in India should be responsible and that such form of government shall in no event be lower than that of any self-governing dominion."

Immediately after the dispersal of the Conference strong criticism of the report was voiced by certain Muslim leaders and these criticisms in turn evoked counter-

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claims from the Hindu side. At the 1928 autumn session of the Central Legislature in Simla no steps were taken to bring the report before the Assembly. Later on Mr. Jinnah stated quite definitely that the Nehru Report had not been accepted by the Muslim community; and when the Congress met for its annual session in December, 1928, still further difficulties arose. This session of the Congress, which was held at Calcutta and which was preceded by a further meeting of the All-Parties Conference, was chiefly remarkable for the fact that it

Gandhi's return to Politics.

brought Mr. Gandhi back again, after some years of retirement, to take an active part in Congress politics. His immediate task was to avert the division of Congress into two parties, one of which would have been led by Pandit Motilal Nehru and the other by his more impetuous son, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru; and on this occasion Mr. Gandhi threw his weight on the side of moderation. He prepared a draft for the All-Parties Conference, which accepted the Nehru Report "provided, however, that the Congress is not to be bound by the Constitution if it is not accepted on or before December the 31st, 1930." Subsequently he had to reduce the time limit for the acceptance of the Nehru Report by Parliament from two years to one. In the Subjects Committee of the Congress, which followed, a resolution repudiating dominion status and claiming independence was lost by 973 against 1,350 votes after a prolonged and heated debate.

At the Delhi session of the Legislature which opened on January 28th, 1929, His Excellency the Viceroy concluded his address in the following words:—

"I tell this Assembly again, and through them India, that the declaration of 1917 stands and will stand for all time as the solemn pledge of the British people to do all that

1929. Viceroy's Appeal for Trust.

can be done by one people to assist another to attain full national political stature and that the pledge so given will never be dishonoured. * * * Those, therefore, who preach that a new generation has arisen in England which seeks to explain away

the significance of the 1917 declaration, are, consciously or unconsciously, but not the less really, misrepresenting the purpose of Great Britain and poisoning the wells by which the common life of India and Great Britain is supported and sustained. If there are Indians who are thus tempted to mistrust Great Britain, there are no doubt many in Great Britain, resentful of what they will know to be an unfounded and ungenerous accusation, who may mistrust some of those who speak for India."

The year 1929 was marked by several terrorist outrages. In April there was the bomb thrown in the Legislative Assembly. This was followed a few

**Terrorist
outrages.**

days later by the decision of the President ruling out of order the further consideration of the Public Safety Bill (which was designed to provide powers against revolutionary Communist activities) on the ground that it could not be discussed without referring to matters which were then *sub judice* in the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case. The Viceroy was thus compelled to promulgate the Bill as an Ordinance. At the end of the year there was the murder of Mr. Saunders of the Indian Police in Lahore, which led to the Lahore Conspiracy Case, and also the unsuccessful attempt to derail the Viceregal train as it approached Delhi on December 23rd, 1929.

By far the most important event of the year, however, was the issue by the Viceroy on October 31st, 1929, on his return from four months' stay

**Announcement of
Round Table
Conference.**

in England, of a Gazette Extraordinary announcing the recognition of Dominion Status as the ultimate and logical goal of Indian political aspirations and declaring that, after the report of the Statutory Commission had been published, a Round Table Conference would be held in order that full and adequate expression of Indian views might be obtained before proposals for the future government of the country were laid before the British Parliament. It must be remembered here that the Conservative Government in

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England had been replaced by a Labour Government under Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in May, 1929. The reception of this announcement in India was at first encouraging ; but once again obstruction came from the Congress Party. A manifesto issued at Delhi by certain leading politicians at the beginning of November contained the cautious statement that " we hope to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government," but an ominous reference to certain conditions followed. By the end of November the Liberals, the Hindu Mahasabha group, the Muslims, the Justice or non-Brahmin party of the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, and the Europeans had expressed unanimous support of the offer contained in the Viceroy's announcement. On December 23rd, 1929, His Excellency received Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru and also Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Patel, the President of the Assembly, and an inconclusive discussion took place. The scene then shifted to Lahore where the annual sessions of the Working Committee and the Congress lasted for over one

Lahore Congress.

week. In the end a resolution was issued, which must be quoted at length :—" This Congress endorses the action of the Working Committee in connection with the manifesto signed by party leaders, including Congressmen, on the Viceregal pronouncement of the 31st of October relating to Dominion Status, and appreciates the efforts of the Viceroy towards a settlement of the national movement for Swaraj. The Congress, however, having considered all that has since happened, and the result of the meeting between Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders and the Viceroy, is of opinion that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress

Round Table Conference rejected.

being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference. This Congress therefore in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year, declares that the word ' Swaraj ' in article I of the Congress constitution shall mean complete independence, and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee Report to

have lapsed, and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence for India. As a preliminary step towards organizing a campaign for independence, and in

**Complete
Independence
demanded.**

order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of creed, this Congress resolves upon a complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and committees constituted by Government and calls upon Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections and directs the present Congress members of the legislatures and committees to resign their seats. This Congress appeals to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress, and authorizes the all-India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary." The plunge had now indeed been taken ; the Congress had officially rejected the very plan that had been put forward in the Swarajist amendment to Mr. Rangachari's famous Resolution of 1924 and that had subsequently been confirmed on several occasions as representing the "national" demand. As time went on, however, there were signs that the more moderate adherents of the Congress were doubtful of the wisdom of rejecting the opportunity of attending the Conference in London. Moreover the official decision of the Congress to reject the Viceroy's offer destroyed the alliance which had been established between them and the Liberals over the boycott of the Statutory Commission ; and the All-India Liberal Federation at its annual meeting declared its intention of co-operating with the Round Table Conference.

Two other points in the Lahore Resolutions also deserve notice. In the first place, the resolutions included an announcement, which had first been made some years before without attract-

**Repudiation of
debts.**

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ing serious attention, to the effect that, if Swaraj were attained, the Indian Nationalist Government would reserve the right to repudiate such debt obligations of the Government of India as it considered had not been incurred in the interests of the country. The effect on this occasion was more serious.

In the second place there was a Resolution that instituted an annual "Independence Day," which was observed for the first time on the 26th January, 1930, and on which succeeding generations of Indians have been taught to asseverate that "the British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom * * * but has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually." The amazing character of this pledge is obvious ; for however damning an indictment of the British Government it might be, if true, it would equally in that case stamp the people of India themselves as a set of economic, political, cultural, and spiritual wrecks, which few who take the pledge would be prepared to admit. It is, indeed, one of those sweeping assertions which so readily take the place of reasoning.

A few weeks after the meeting of the Congress at Lahore,

1930. Civil Disobedience starts. Mr. Gandhi pronounced India unfit for civil disobedience ; but he soon changed his mind and on March 12th he initiated the movement by setting out in procession

from Ahmedabad to the sea to break the salt laws. There were many eminent leaders who wholeheartedly deplored the action which Mr. Gandhi had elected to take, but again they had no effectual means of deterring him from his purpose. On April 5th he reached Dandi Beach and formally inaugurated the movement. There is no necessity from the point of view of this narrative to follow in detail the course of this campaign and the

many different illegal activities which it included.

Suffice it to say that Mr. Gandhi was arrested on May 5th and detained without trial as a State prisoner; on June 30th the Working Committee was declared an unlawful association and its acting President, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and several other members were arrested; during the first three months there were more than 50 serious riots, including the exceptionally bad one at Sholapur, where martial law had to be proclaimed; and thereafter

Riots. —and in this respect the events of 1942 provide a close parallel—

there was an increasing number of terrorist and bomb outrages. On April 18th took place the famous Chit-tagong Armouries Raid—organized from the local Congress Office. Bombs were flung at Sir Charles Tegart, Commissioner of Police in Calcutta; Mr. Lowman, the Inspector-General of Police, Bengal, was killed; Col. Simpson was shot dead

Outrages. in the Bengal Secretariat, and Mrs. Curtis, the wife of a military officer

in Lahore, was brutally murdered and her two children injured. As always, many entirely innocent persons suffered in these outrages. All Provinces were more or less affected by the movement, but nowhere was the administrative machinery paralysed and, despite the strain imposed upon Government and their servants, their normal functions continued to be discharged throughout the country. We have no space here to pursue the course of events in each Province, many of which—for instance, the exploits of the Khudai Khidmatgars or Red Shirts in the North West Frontier Province—would require separate chapters to themselves. The main point, as on every other occasion, is that the movement achieved nothing except loss and suffering and a grave amount of temporary embarrassment to the authorities.

In the autumn of 1930 the life of the third Legislative Assembly (which had been extended for a year beyond the normal period) came to an end. The elections

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which ensued were boycotted by the Congress and the new, or fourth, Assembly, which met in Delhi in January, 1931, contained no representatives of that Party.

Fourth Assembly Elections.

Meanwhile the report of the Simon Commission was published in June, 1930; the delegates to the first Round Table Conference left India during the autumn; and the Conference was formally inaugurated at St. James' Palace on November 12th. On the same day the unanimous Reforms despatch of the Government of India was published. There followed the vitally important declaration of the Princes in favour of Federation, which led to rapid progress in the "Federal Relations Committee" of the Conference. Discussions in the "Minorities Committee" failed, however, to reach any settlement. The first Round Table Conference ended on January 19th, 1931, and we shall return later to the announcement then made by the Prime Minister and its results.

First Round Table Conference Meets.

To complete the picture we must first of all refer to an incident which again bears a vivid resemblance to what has taken place in India during the last few months (1942-43). On July 13th, 1930, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jayakar wrote to the Viceroy saying that they thought it their duty to their country and to the Government that they should make an endeavour to ameliorate the present position by discussing the question with some of the leaders of the movement, in the hope and belief that they might be able to help them in the restoration of normal conditions. They, therefore, requested permission to interview Mr. Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in jail so as to put their point of view before them with a view to enabling the big issue of constitutional advance to be solved in a calm atmosphere. His Excellency the Viceroy gave his assent; and from July 23rd to September 5th conversa-

Approaches to Congress Leaders in Jail.

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tions continued between the Liberal leaders and the Congress leaders in jail. Moreover Pandits Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru were allowed to travel from Naini to Yeravda in order to meet Mr. Gandhi. On September 5th the two Liberal leaders announced that their attempts at a settlement had failed and from the correspondence which was published the next day it became clear that, throughout the negotiations, the Congress leaders had refused to modify in any way their "terms of peace" and that the nature of these terms was such as to render it inconceivable that the Government would accept them. No one can say that the possibilities of "conciliation" with the Congress leaders were not exploited to the utmost limit on this occasion. No one equally could pretend that the results then achieved gave any encouragement whatever to the repetition of such a policy on any future occasion.

The Prime Minister's statement on the concluding day of the Round Table Conference in London made it clear that responsibility for the government of India should, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, be placed upon the Legislatures; that the principle of an All-India Federation should be accepted; and that the principle of

**1931. Prime
Minister's
Statement.**

the responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature should be recognized. During a temporary transitional period certain statutory safeguards would be necessary, but it would be

the primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers were so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

Within a week the Viceroy announced that the Government of India had decided, in consultation with Local Governments, to release Mr. Gandhi and the members

Release of Gandhi.

of the Congress Working Committee unconditionally, in order to provide an opportunity for the consideration of the Prime Minister's statement,

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with full liberty for discussion between themselves. Mr. Gandhi, on release, announced that he had an absolutely open mind. During February he and his colleagues decided against any immediate cessation of civil disobedience ; but prolonged discussions took place between the Congress leaders and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Sastri and Mr. Jayakar ; and on February 14th Mr. Gandhi was authorized by the Working Committee to seek an interview with the Viceroy. There followed between February 17th and March 5th, 1931, the long series of private interviews between Mr. Gandhi and Lord Irwin which finally ended on the latter date in what is now generally known

**Irwin-Gandhi
Pact.**

as the Delhi settlement or the Irwin-Gandhi Pact. The main points of this agreement were the effective discontinuance of the civil disobedience movement, the general release of persons undergoing imprisonment in connection therewith and the participation of Congress in the Round Table Conference. Lord Irwin's attitude, in this supreme effort to reach agreement with the Congress leaders, is aptly revealed in the following quotation from his address to the Legislature in January, 1931 :—

“ It has been one of the tragedies of this time that where ultimate purposes have perhaps differed little, if at all, the methods employed by some should have been, as I conceive, far more calculated to impede than to assist the accomplishment of that largely common end. Is it not now possible, I would ask, for those responsible for this policy to try another course that, in the light on the one hand of the sinister events in India, and on the other of the encouragement offered to India by the progress of the Conference in England, would seem to be the more excellent way ? ”

In April, 1931, Lord Irwin sailed from India and was succeeded by Lord Willingdon. Perhaps the main importance of the Delhi settlement was that it had

Lord Willingdon.

brought Mr. Gandhi for once into the constitutional fold. The Pact was ratified by the Congress at Karachi without a single dissentient vote ; but throughout the country Congressmen soon began to proclaim the settlement as a "victory" for the Congress or as a "truce". Within three weeks began the savage communal riots at Cawnpore, which were probably the worst recorded throughout this review. They were started by the attempts of Congress adherents to force Mohammadan shopkeepers to observe a hartal in memory of Bhagat Singh, who had been condemned to death and executed for terrorist crimes, and whose "bravery and sacrifice" had been

Breaches of the pact.

admired by the Congress session at Karachi. Thereafter the agrarian agitation in the United Provinces, led by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and the activities of the "Red Shirts" in the North-West Frontier Province under Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, began to give cause for increasing uneasiness and doubt whether the Congress intended to adhere to their side of the settlement. Later on Mr. Gandhi began to make complaints against Government. His "charge sheet", as it was called, was effectively disposed of by the Government of India ; and they had previously rejected his proposal that a permanent board of arbitration should be set up to decide questions of the interpretation of the settlement and the observance of its terms by one party or the other. This proposal implied that the Pact itself was something above and beyond the ordinary law and also that Government and the Congress were two equal parties, disputes between whom required reference to a third party. In August Mr. Gandhi, in contravention of the terms of the settlement, informed the Viceroy that the situation made his departure for London impossible ; but further discussions took place between the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi and

Gandhi attends second R. T. C. at the end of August he left to attend the Round Table Conference in England. Not even his most ardent supporters will claim that Mr. Gandhi's participation in that Conference was a success. Communal

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differences were holding up progress on all sides and the Minorities sub-committee was finally obliged to report failure to reach a settlement. Mr. Gandhi consistently refused to consider any proposal for separate electorates for any community except the Mohammadans, the Sikhs and the Europeans, and as regards the Depressed Classes he insisted that they were Hindus and must be kept within the Hindu fold. Dr. Ambedkar was led by his unyielding attitude into a definite demand for separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. On December 1st, 1931, the Prime Minister made a further announcement of the determination of the British Government to pursue the policy of Federal responsibility subject to certain safeguards during a transitional period ; and this announcement was of special significance since the Labour Government in England had been replaced by a National Government including many Conservative Ministers.

Meanwhile the situation both in the United Provinces, where a no-tax campaign had been launched, and also in the North-West Frontier Province, continued to deteriorate ; and many further terrorist outrages had occurred. It is not implied that these outrages were part of the Congress civil disobedience movement—indeed the Congress organization themselves condemned them, however ambiguously, on more than one occasion—but their frequency was an important feature of the times and marked the spirit of revolution which Congress had so dangerously aroused. The year 1931 saw the murder of Mr. Peddie, District Magistrate of Midnapore ; an attempt on the life of Sir Ernest Hotson, Acting Governor of Bombay ; the shooting of Mr. Garlic, District Judge of Alipore ; the wounding of Mr. Cassels, Commissioner of the Dacca Division ; the murder at a football match in Chittagong of K. B. Ahsanullah ; an attempt on the life of Mr. Villiers, President of the European Association and the murder of Mr. Stevens, District Magistrate of Tipperah by two young Bengali girls.

At the end of December Mr. Gandhi returned from London and immediately approached the Viceroy regarding the action that the authorities had been compelled to take in the Frontier Province, the United Provinces and Bengal. His Excellency made it clear that he would be willing to see Mr. Gandhi if, as he hoped, the latter had no personal share in responsibility for, or approved of, the Congress activities, but emphasised that he would not be prepared to discuss the measures which it had been found necessary to take. In reply Mr. Gandhi stated that he could not repudiate his colleagues in advance and threatened a civil disobedience movement. His Excellency informed Mr. Gandhi that "no Government, consistent with the discharge of their responsibility, can be subjected to conditions sought to be imposed under the menace of unlawful action by any political organization"; and thereupon Mr. Gandhi announced the revival of civil disobedience.

On this occasion, unlike previous occasions, the Government took swift and comprehensive action. Mr. Gandhi was arrested with Mr. Vallabhai Patel on January 4th and detained as a State prisoner. Other Congress leaders followed him into jail; certain ordinances were promulgated conferring emergency powers; and within a few months the back of the revived movement was broken. The absence of serious disturbances or clashes between the police and the public was particularly marked as compared to the opening weeks of the campaign of 1930. The Congress session to be held in Delhi on April 23rd, 1932, was banned; but a few persons managed to evade the vigilance of the police and "passed unanimously" five resolutions gabbled out by one of their members. The proceedings lasted less than five minutes. Throughout the latter half of 1932 the movement gradually declined.

Meanwhile on March 19th, 1932, His Majesty's Government announced, in reply to a manifesto signed by many Indian leaders recommending that course, that

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they had decided to assume responsibility for a communal decision in the absence of any likelihood of an agreement among the communities themselves.

H.M.G. undertake Communal Award.

Three constitutional committees had arrived in India at the end of January and vigorously pursued their tasks during the ensuing months. On June 27th, 1932, the Secretary of State announced the

Joint Select Committee on Reform Bill.

intention to appoint a Joint Select Committee of Parliament to consider, in consultation with representatives of Indian opinion, concrete constitutional proposals before a Bill was actually introduced ; but one final session of the Round Table Conference took place at the end of the year.

Third R. T. C.

On August 17th the Communal Award was announced and met, as was to be expected, with criticism from all sides.

There had been a revival of communal disturbances during the early summer of 1932, and in Bombay from May 14th to July 5th the casualties had amounted to 211 killed and over 2,600 injured.

Communal Disturbances.

The tale of terrorist outrages also continued during 1932 and 97 terrorist crimes were recorded. On February 6th at the Convocation ceremony of the Calcutta University an attempt was made by a girl student to assassinate the Governor of Bengal. Mr. Douglas the

Terrorist Outrages.

District Magistrate of Midnapore, was shot and mortally wounded on April 30th. On June 30th Captain Cameron was shot dead in the Chittagong district ; on June 27th Mr. Sen, an Indian Magistrate, was shot dead while asleep in his house at Dacca ; on July 29th Mr. Ellison, Superintendent of Police at Comilla was shot and died ; on August 5th an attempt was made on the life of Sir Alfred Watson, Editor of the *Statesman* ; on August 22nd Mr. Grassby, Superintendent of Police, was shot at in Dacca ; on

September 24th an organized attack was made on the railway institute at Pahartali in Chittagong when an elderly lady, Mrs. Sullivan, was killed and 13 persons of both sexes wounded; on September 28th another attempt was made on Sir Alfred Watson; and on November 11th Mr. Luke, Superintendent of Rajshahi Jail, was shot and wounded.

It was in conditions of this kind, when the civil disobedience movement was failing and Mr. Gandhi's stock was low, that he decided on September 13th "to fast unto death" in Yeravda Jail unless

Gandhi's "Fast unto death."

the method of representation provided for the Depressed Classes was altered. Dr. Ambedkar described the fast as a "sheer political stunt", while other critics saw in it an attempt to retrieve a dwindling prestige. Government announced that they could not possibly allow their action to be influenced by methods of this kind, but they agreed to let Mr. Gandhi be removed from jail to a suitable private residence. The fast began on 20th September and after a few days of feverish discussion a settlement was reached which was known as the "Poona Pact". We need not here enter into the details of this settlement, beyond remarking that its results might well have been achieved at the

Poona Pact.

Round Table Conference itself, if Mr. Gandhi had not shown himself so uncompromising on that occasion. The fast illustrated the manner in which Mr. Gandhi was still able to appeal to the emotions not only of the masses, but also of their leaders, at the expense of their reason. It was followed by a whirlwind campaign

Removal of untouchability campaign.

for the removal of the disabilities attached to the Depressed Classes; but little was achieved in this respect and, indeed, it was obvious that a system so deeply embedded in the history and traditions of a people could not be expected to succumb to a sudden onslaught of emotion. However, the campaign continued; there was a Unity Conference at Allahabad from November 3rd to November 15th, the results of which

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were not ratified by the communities concerned, and Mr. Gandhi himself was given facilities while in jail to carry on his propaganda against untouchability.

During 1933 Government steadily pursued the dual policy of perseverance in the work of constitutional reform and resolute action for the maintenance of public tranquillity ; and interest was correspondingly divided between events in England and in India. So far as constitutional progress is concerned, the most important event was the publication of the

1933. Publication of the "White Paper."

White Paper containing the proposals of His Majesty's Government for constitutional reform on March 18th, 1933. It was hailed as usual with much criticism, which was centred mainly on the "safeguards" incorporated in the constitutional scheme. It would be interesting, if space

Congress opposition.

permitted, to run through these safeguards and show, as could very easily be shown, that each one of them was directly related, and therefore owed its existence, to one or other of the specific modes of intransigence and obstruction practised by the Congress Party during the preceding twelve or fifteen years. It is also of interest to note at this point the growing opposition in the right wing section of the Conservative Party in England to the scheme of constitutional reform ; and again it would be easy to show how the tactics of Mr. Gandhi and his followers had consistently played straight into the hands of the "die hards" in England and provided them with all the justification that they required for their attitude. Nevertheless, the decline of civil disobedience in India, just as had happened ten years or so before, began to be accompanied by the growth of a more constructive and co-operative political spirit throughout the country. The Legislatures accepted and passed the Bills placed before them to embody the main features of the ordinances which had been promulgated for the suppression of Congress lawlessness ; and Parties which had declined to send representatives to the third Round Table

conference began to show anxiety to be represented before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament. Throughout the year the proceedings of that Committee were closely followed in India.

As to Congress activities, the decline in the civil disobedience movement continued, and the chief landmarks were Mr. **Decline of Civil Disobedience.** Gandhi's two fasts in May and August 1933, followed by his increasing absorption in the untouchability campaign to the neglect of directly political activities; the substitution of individual for mass civil disobedience; and, towards the end of the year, the increasingly socialistic or communistic teachings of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the New Delhi session of the Assembly at the beginning of 1933 two non-official Bills were brought forward to deal with the subject of "untouchability" and "temple entry"; but protracted discussion on other non-official Bills by members who were hostile or indifferent to this cause prevented them from coming up for discussion; and when finally one of them came before the Simla session in August, no great interest was taken in the matter. Dr. Ambedkar had declared that the Depressed Classes were not particularly interested in temple entry and were far more concerned in improving their economic and social position.

A meeting of the Congress in Calcutta at the beginning of April was banned and attempts to hold it were frustrated. We may also notice the agitation which arose on this, as on every other occasion on which a civil disobedience movement failed, with the object of stirring up feeling regarding the treatment of those who had voluntarily found their way to jail for participation in the movement. This card has invariably been played by Congress when things were going badly for them.

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On May 1st Mr. Gandhi announced his intention for reasons wholly unconnected with Government and solely connected with the harijan movement, and in obedience to a "peremptory call from within," to undertake a three weeks' fast from May 8th.

Gandhi's three weeks' Fast and release.

Just after the commencement of the fast Government announced that they had decided to set Mr. Gandhi at liberty "in view of the nature and objects of the fast and the attitude of mind it discloses" and he was released unconditionally on that day. Civil disobedience was then temporarily suspended for a period of six weeks, which period was subsequently extended for a further six weeks. Mr. Gandhi survived his fast successfully but took some time to recover. On June 24th Mr. Asaf Ali addressed an open letter to him declaring that, although civil disobedience had been before the country for fourteen years, it had proved a virtual failure so far as political ends were concerned and stating that what Congress needed was a "new enthusiasm for a new objective", which could best be secured by concentrating on the capture of the Legislatures. Here again we note a repetition of past history; and when a Conference of Congress leaders from all Provinces was convened at Poona from July 12th to 14th Mr. Gandhi was again presented with the problem of avoiding dissensions within his party. A resolution in favour of the unconditional withdrawal of civil disobedience was rejected; as was also a second resolution in favour of the adoption of individual civil disobedience. A third resolution was passed authorizing Mr. Gandhi to seek an interview with the Viceroy, but the interview was refused on the grounds that civil disobedience had not been abandoned. A few days later on July 18th Congressmen were amazed by an announcement from Mr. Gandhi that he had advised the Acting President,

Individual Civil Disobedience.

Mr. Aney, to suspend civil disobedience until further notice and to replace it, despite the Poona resolution, by individual civil disobedience. "My head reels," he said "at the thought of entering Councils for the sake of winning independence. They

may give some relief in specific cases, but that is the miasma to keep the country from its goal." All Congress organizations were to cease to exist for the time being, but provincial and All-India "dictators" were to continue and Congressmen were expected to carry on "constructive activities." Mr. Gandhi decided to dissolve his Ashram at Sabarmati and to undertake a march with some of his followers to a village in the Kaira district urging people on the way to start individual civil disobedience. This programme was obviously intended to revive memories of his famous march to the sea in 1930 ; but he was promptly arrested and taken to Poona.

**Gandhi
re-arrested.**

There he was released after being served with an order restricting his activities, but on indicating his intention of disobeying the order he was re-arrested and on August 3rd he was sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment. As a convicted prisoner Government held he was not entitled to all the facilities that he had enjoyed as a State prisoner ; but he was allowed to see two visitors a day and to write a specified number of newspaper articles. These concessions did not satisfy him and on August 16th he started

**Another Fast,
release and
withdrawal from
Politics.**

yet another fast, although on this occasion it should more properly be called a "hunger strike". By August 23rd danger to his life became apparent and he was released on medical grounds. Little interest was created by this fast and Mr. Gandhi decided, after release, to refrain from further political activities for the full year from August 3rd, 1932, for which he would have remained in jail if he had not been released.

The rest of the year was remarkable for an exchange of letters between Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (who was released from jail in October), which illustrated the difference between their two points of view. Congressmen had hoped that the Pandit might pursue a more realistic policy, but he contented himself with preaching the doctrine that the achievement of freedom lay in a "divesting of vested interests", the first of which would be the British Government, the next the

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Indian Princes, and the last the monied and other privileged classes. Towards the end of October small groups of Congressmen in Bombay and Madras, finding it impossible to induce Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Nehru to consent to a modification in the Party's programme,

Growth of Constitutional Party in Congress.

decided to set up separate political organizations which bore the familiar titles "Democratic Swaraj party" and "Congress Swaraj party". By the end of the year active manifestations of civil disobedience were practically non-existent. Meanwhile, during the first week of November, Mr. Gandhi started an All-India propaganda tour in the interests of the anti-untouchability campaign and by the end of the year had visited the Central Provinces, Delhi and parts of the Madras Presidency. He met with some obstruction from orthodox or "Sanatanist" Hindus, but encountered little direct opposition and his meetings were still crowded.

As a tail piece to the record of 1933, we may add the fact that the number of terrorist outrages during this year fell to 43, the most notable being the murder of Mr. Burge, the District Magistrate at Midnapore as he was about to take part in a local football match on September 2nd, 1933.

Reduction of Terrorist Crime.

The most important events of the year 1934, from the point of view of this record, were the final suspension of the Congress civil disobedience movement on April 7th, followed by the return of Congress to constitutionalism after four and a half years of disastrous experimenting in illegal activities; the Bombay session of the Congress at the end of October followed by Mr. Gandhi's retirement from political activities; the publication of the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on November 23rd; and the elections to the Legislative Assembly which took place at the end of the year and brought the new or fifth Assembly into existence at the beginning of 1935.

1934.

When 1934 opened, Congress was still in the hypnotic trance in which Mr. Gandhi had placed it at Poona in July of the previous year ; but there were signs of a return to consciousness. On January 15th occurred the disastrous Bihar earthquake, which in Bihar itself was sufficient to submerge political differences. Outside Bihar the Congress press and nationalist politicians did not shrink from exploiting the effects of the earthquake for political ends. Mr. Gandhi suspended his harijan tour to make a brief and belated visit to Bihar on March 11th. On April 7th he made his announcement suspending "civil disobedience for Swaraj, as distinguished from specific grievances" ; and added the remarkable

Suspension of Civil Disobedience.

statement that in future he alone would offer civil disobedience and none in his life time should do so without his consent.

From then onwards the political situation passed through a period of confusion in which the conflicting claims of "council entry", "anti-untouchability" and "direct action" (with a communistic flavour) were canvassed by their respective protagonists and their followers. The official announcement on May 1st that there would be a general election to the Legislative Assembly at the end of the year served to rally those among Congress who were in favour of a return to action in the constitutional sphere ; and a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Patna on May 17th

Congress Parliamentary Board.

decided on the constitution of a Parliamentary Board, which would select Congress candidates for the elections and exercise general control over the politics of Congress representatives in the Legislature. On June 6th the Government of India withdrew the ban on the Congress organizations ; and on June 15th the Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Board met at Bombay. Opinions on the Communal Award were sharply divided and the Working Committee finally passed a resolution containing the following remarkable words—"In view of the differences of opinion on the subject among the chief communities,

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the Congress can neither accept nor reject the communal decision so long as this division of opinion lasts ". While differences on the communal question threatened the secession of the party led by Pandit Malaviya and Mr. Aney, an even more significant development was the emergence of the Congress Socialist Group resulting from

Emergence of Congress Socialists.

the semi-communist teachings of Pandit Nehru. At the end of the previous year he had declared—"The choice before the world today lies between Communism and Fascism, and I am all for the former." The Congress Socialists, in opposition to the official body, favoured the continuance of direct action, by which they meant civil disobedience bereft of its troublesome creed of non-violence. The Working Committee at Bombay again had to trim their sails, and they passed a resolution which, while "welcoming the formation of groups representing different schools of thought, deprecated talk about confiscation of private property and the necessity of a class war ". On his way to Poona on June 19th Mr. Gandhi had to submit to a black flag demonstration by Sanatanists and on June 25th a bomb, generally believed to have been intended for Mr. Gandhi, was thrown near the Poona city municipal hall. The news of this attempt on his life caused consternation and astonishment ; and Mr. Rajagopalachari, in a statement to the press, remarked "The Poona outrage must bring wisdom to those who lightly hold the view that violence is legitimate in a good cause and may be tolerated for the achievement of rights."

On August 4th Pandit Malaviya and Mr. Aney announced their intention to set up a separate

Internal Dissensions.

"Nationalist Party " to contest the Assembly elections ; and it was in this atmosphere, threatened with disruption by the Socialist group and with the secession of the Malaviya group already almost an accomplished fact, that Mr. Gandhi issued a statement on September 17th, in which he unmistakably indicated his intention to retire from the Congress after the plenary session at Bombay in October. The session itself—the first held

since the meeting in Karachi in 1931—was a personal triumph for Mr. Gandhi. In the circumstances described above he managed to inflict

Bombay Congress. decisive defeats on both the
Gandhi's Nationalists and the Socialists, but
Retirement. without driving either from the Congress fold. On many issues

respect for his wishes rather than practical considerations governed the decisions. Alterations were made in the Congress constitution reducing the number of delegates from 6,000 to 2,000 and the total membership of the All-India Congress Committee to 166, which was about half the previous number. Finally a lengthy resolution set up the All-India Village Industries Association. Thus once more Mr. Gandhi asserted his personal supremacy and succeeded in keeping the divergent elements under one leadership, his own. Polling for the Legislative Assembly started in November and finally resulted in

Fifth Assembly giving the Congress 44 seats, the
Election. Nationalists under Pandit Malaviya 11 seats, the Independents 22 and the European group 11. The result

was claimed as a "sweeping Congress victory", but it would be more accurate to say that they had regained approximately the position which they had occupied before boycotting the Councils in 1930. This Assembly is still in existence.

The publication of the Joint Parliamentary Report on Indian constitutional reform on

Publication November 23rd, 1934, was an event
of Joint of historic interest and importance
Parliamentary for India no less than for the Empire.
Report.

It was more than eighteen months since the White Paper had been published, and the interval had shown not only the decline and fall of civil disobedience, but increasing hostility to the extent and nature of many of the reforms proposals from a section of the Conservative Party, backed by a growing body of British public opinion. In India the reception of the Report was what the reader of this review must by now have learnt to expect. Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, Secretary of the Parliamentary Board, issued an immediate

**Congress
Opposition.**

statement. "The Congress mandate is clear and unmistakable. It is obvious that no Congressman can have anything to say on the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report." In spite of this apparently final pronouncement, the Working Committee met at Patna on December 5th and expressed their views in an extremely lengthy resolution, in which, for the first time, appeared the somewhat nebulous conception of a constituent assembly as the only alternative which Congress could propose. In the welter of criticism with which the Report was met, a nationalist paper in Bombay summed up the position with surprising frankness.—"With the words 'rejection' and 'unacceptable' always on their lips, neither group (*i.e.* Congress or Moderates) has any practical policy to offer the country. If all are agreed that the new constitution does not improve the political condition of the masses, it is obviously wrong to leave the Government under the impression that in the end it will be worked. If on the other hand, it is agreed that the constitution will have to be worked willy nilly, when it comes, why not be honest about it and say so?"

Before closing the record for 1934, we must refer again to

**Gandhi and Village
Industries
Association.**

Mr. Gandhi's organization of the Village Industries Association. Although the avowed objects of this association were economic and humanitarian, Government saw in it an organization that might be of far-reaching political importance. The advice which they conveyed in a confidential circular to Provincial Governments was irregularly obtained by the press and made the basis of a published article in December, and official suspicion of the movement came in for considerable criticism. That the Government view was, however, justified was clear from a statement made by Mr. Vallabhai Patel at Ahmedabad. "We have not given up the fight for freedom," he said "we have merely changed the mode of the fight". It was indeed clear that, while Mr. Gandhi wished the Assembly to be run by Congressmen, he also desired the economic fight to be waged by himself from

outside the Congress and it may well have been with an eye on some future "non-violent struggle" that the organization of the Village Industries Association was taken in hand.

Two other isolated events may be noted here. In the first place it was during 1934 that Mr. Jinnah returned from a stay of two years in England and again accepted the Presidentship of the All-India Muslim League. The second event was the attempt on the life of His Excellency Sir John Anderson at Leborg race-course on May 8th. It is true, however, to say that during this year the terrorist menace in Bengal had begun to yield to steady and continuous pressure. Indeed, at the end of 1934 and the beginning of 1935, we find a far more peaceful atmosphere in India than had been the case for a great many years.

The year 1935 need not detain us long. The new Legislative Assembly, which met on January 21st, 1935, debated the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and accepted the Communal Award "so

far as it goes, until a substitute is agreed upon by the various communities concerned"; it also declared that the scheme of provincial government included "various objectionable features" which should be removed, and that the scheme of central government or All-India federation was "fundamentally and totally unacceptable". On May 31st occurred the Quetta earthquake; and again the Congress Party, in spite of the magnificent rescue work performed by British and Indian troops, attempted to make racial and political capital out of the disaster. But these are mere incidents. The main event

of the year was the passing of the new Government of India Bill after prolonged debates in Parliament. The measure obtained the Royal assent on August 2nd, 1935; and thus

was brought to an end the tremendous task of framing a new constitution for India which had occupied attention since the Statutory Commission started work in 1928.

CHAPTER V

1935-1939

The events of this concluding period in our review can be recapitulated more briefly than those in our earlier chapters. The period falls roughly into two halves during the first of which Government were busy with all the elaborate preparations required to bring the new constitution into existence while the Congress Party debated the extent to which they would be prepared to co-operate in working it. The second half covers the period of approximately two brief years during which the Congress governed, to begin with six, and later seven of the Provinces of India, and terminates with their decision to resign this responsibility in consequence of their attitude towards the present war.

During the first of these two periods, in spite of some resistance from the extreme left wing, it soon became obvious that the Congress could not afford to abstain from constitutional methods by refusing to take part in the elections to the new Provincial Legislatures ; but, as we shall see, the final decision to take office was postponed until the very last moment, or, indeed, beyond it.

Congress Attitude to Reforms.

Congress Jubilee.

In December, 1935, occurred the Congress jubilee, which was marked by no great popular interest, but by the issue of a lengthy statement recording the achievements of Congress by " legitimate and peaceful means " since 1920. The reader of this record will have seen for himself what these achievements were and how far the methods adopted can appropriately be called either legitimate or peaceful. Early in 1936 occurred the death of His Majesty King George V, the genuine public sorrow at which sad event, as also the striking demonstrations of loyalty which had accompanied his Silver Jubilee in May, 1935, bore striking witness to the esteem and affection in which he had been held by all classes and creeds in India.

In April, 1936, Lord Willingdon left India and the present Viceroy entered upon his office. Both on the occasion of Lord Willingdon's farewell address to the Legislatures and of the present Viceroy's first address to them, the Congress opposition, with concerted discourtesy, absented themselves from the chamber. At the Congress meeting at Lucknow in April, 1936, the President, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, stated that "to accept office under the conditions of the Act is to negative our objection to it and to stand self-condemned"; but in spite of this a compromise was effected, possibly at the instance of Mr. Gandhi although he took no part in the proceedings, by which it was resolved to leave the question to be decided at the proper time.

**1936. Lord
Linlithgow
Arrives.**

In August, 1936, the Congress issued its election manifesto. It stated the necessity of independence from British control as the pre-requisite for national regeneration; affirmed opposition to India's participation in any war dictated by British Imperialists; defined the purpose of sending Congressmen to the Legislatures as the combating and ending of the new constitution; and declared that in the Legislatures and outside they would seek to strengthen the people and develop the conditions essential for freedom. The detailed programme included the abolition of all repressive legislation, the release of "political prisoners", the reform of land tenure, the relief of indebtedness, great improvements in the lot of industrial labour, civic equality for the humblest communities and sweeping reforms in prison administration. Absolute hostility to the introduction of Federation was also affirmed. At the annual session of the Congress at Faizpur in December, 1936, which month also saw the abdication of King Edward VIII and the succession of King George VI, the determination to combat and end the new constitution was reaffirmed; the election manifesto was endorsed; and Congressmen were exhorted to demand, inside and outside the Legislatures, the summoning of a constituent assembly for the framing

**Congress Election
Manifesto.**

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of an acceptable constitution. Resolutions were also passed warning the country to resist attempts to utilize Indian man-power and resources in the event of a war in which Britain was involved ; calling for a nation-wide hartal on April 1st, the day of the inauguration of the new constitution ; and declaring that the nation should abstain from celebration of the King's Coronation, although it was added that this was not intended to express ill-will or discourtesy to the King's person.

The elections to the new Provincial Legislatures were completed by February, 1937, and resulted in Congress majorities sufficient to form ministries in all Provinces except the Punjab, Sind, Bengal, Assam and the North-West Frontier Province. In February, 1937, the aims

1937. Provincial Autonomy Election.

of Congress were repeated at a meeting of the Working Committee which considered the setting up of machinery for the central control of the Congress Party in the Provincial Legislatures and laid stress on the necessity for contact and discipline in the organization from the villages upwards. Then followed the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Delhi, which, on March 18th, 1937, passed the notorious resolution permitting the acceptance of office in Provinces where the Congress commanded a majority, provided that each leader was satisfied, and could state publicly, that the Governor

Conditions of acceptance of Office by Congress Ministries.

would not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of Ministers in regard to constitutional activities. Immediately afterwards, a " convention " of Provincial legislators and others met and a solemn oath was taken to work for the independence of India and for the furtherance of the aims of Congress.

We have already noticed the fact that the special powers, to the exercise of which the Congress took such strong objection, owed their existence directly, if not entirely, to their own past acts and methods. In

making the demand, however, that they should not be used, Mr. Gandhi had, as usual, manoeuvred himself into a favourable position. He had not definitely committed himself to the views of either wing of Congress, but, whatever the ultimate outcome of the demand might be, he himself would be in a position to make capital out of it. If the assurances were refused, he could lay the blame on the Governors; and if the demand were successful, he could claim a victory which would save the face of the Congress in accepting office. It is difficult to believe that he was under any illusion as to the possibility of an undertaking by Governors, the effect of which would in fact have been to contract out of the Act; and the result, as everyone knows, was that

**Inauguration of
New Constitution.**

on April 1st, 1937, non-Congress Ministries came into power in five Provinces, while in the remaining six it became necessary to call upon representatives of the minority to accept the responsibility which the Congress had declined. From Mr. Gandhi's point of view the manoeuvre was a success. The wrath of the right wing was diverted against "Government" and the minority Ministries; the left wing was satisfied; and all sections of his followers were now obliged to look to him to find a way out of the impasse into which he had led them.

For some time the constitutional situation in minority Provinces continued to be the subject of debate in the press and of numerous statements and interviews, while the administration in the other five Provinces made an auspicious and uneventful start. On June 22nd, 1937, His Excellency the Viceroy issued a message to India in which he surveyed the constitutional issues involved. Explaining again why Governors could not grant the assurances which the Congress had demanded, he showed clearly the reality of the power and responsibility which was transferred under the new constitution to elected Ministries, and expressed the sincere wish on behalf of his Government and of Parliament that this transfer of power should be accepted without distrust. The effect of this pronouncement was profound and on July 7th

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the Working Committee passed a resolution permitting Congressmen to accept office. Public opinion had proved too strong to resist ; but even now the High Command could not give way with a wholly good grace. The resolution in which the decision was taken referred to the relation between Britain and India as that of exploiter and exploited and explicitly affirmed that office was to be accepted (in the time honoured phrase) for the purpose of combating the Act and prosecuting the programme of the election manifesto.

Thus, at long last, Congress Ministries became responsible for the control of the destinies of millions of their countrymen. But the final decision to allow acceptance of office had only been taken on the express condition of centralised control of policy by the Congress Working Committee ; and the Congress Premiers, who met almost immediately in Wardha to discuss co-ordination of policy, thus embarked on the difficult experiment of working democracy subject to the control of an autocratic party caucus. The road before them was far from smooth and the counsels of their governing body were still far from being united. We have already noted the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party and the semi-Communist views of the President at that time, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He had himself consistently opposed the taking of office and, what is more, in the course of the election campaign, his speeches had clearly indicated the necessity for revolution and rebellion if *Swaraj* were to be obtained. By *Swaraj* he did not mean merely the replacement of British by Indian officials, but a "*Panchayat Raj*," or in other words a Soviet Regime. In his presidential address at the Faizpur Congress he used the significant words—"If war comes or other great crises, India's attitude will make a difference. *We hold the keys of success in our hands if we but turn them rightly.*" His agrarian campaign with its cries of "rent reduction," "debt cancellation" and "abolition of landlordism," was storing up trouble for the future.

It was, however, in the field of law and order that the conflict between policy and administrative practice soon became most evident. We need not here follow

**Progress of
Provincial
Autonomy.**

the difficulties of the Congress Governments in the matter of the release of "political prisoners," the removal of restrictions upon subversive organizations and the repeal of "repressive legislation." Congressmen had for years been opposed to established Government and many of them in the rank and file became impatient at the slowness with which the Congress programme was carried out and critical of the employment of the very machinery of Government which they had been taught to regard as a target of abuse. Nevertheless, substantial progress was made; the guidance of Governors was sympathetic; and although the ships of State had to encounter many temporary storms, the six Congress Governments, to which soon a seventh was added (that of the North-West Frontier Province), survived them without great difficulty. They carried on, indeed, on a more even keel than those in the remaining Provinces, with the notable exception of the Punjab. Communal riots and disturbances did not cease and still had to be met, and were met, by strong police and even military action; prosecutions for sedition were sanctioned and justified in the face of considerable criticism; the press had to be controlled in more than one Province; and above all the Congress Governments had to contend against the very tactics of hunger striking and other forms of passive resistance which they had themselves practised and in the efficacy of which they had led the people to believe. Towards the close of the period under review—in June, 1939—the All-India Congress Committee, in the face of considerable opposition from within, had to pass a resolution forbidding individual Congressmen from offering or organizing civil disobedience without the previous sanction of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned.

During much of these two years Mr. Gandhi's health was not good; but his presence behind the scenes was always

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felt and on many occasions he occupied the centre of the stage. Since, from our point of view, the autocratic

**1938. The
Congress High
Command.**

control of the High Command was, perhaps, the most significant feature of this crucial period, we must devote some space to the domestic policy of the Congress organization and its internal problems. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had been President in 1936 and 1937 and, as we have seen, his personal views had not always been able to carry the day. At the beginning of 1938 he was succeeded by

**Rise of Subhas
Bose.**

an even more extreme figure, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose. Mr. Bose had been arrested in January, 1932, because of his association with the terrorists in Bengal and not because of the support he had been giving to the civil disobedience movement. He had been allowed to go to Europe for reasons of health about a year later and while he was in that country there were clear indications that he favoured mass revolutionary action. He had, therefore, been warned that, if he returned to India, he would not be allowed to remain at liberty. In 1936 he disregarded the warning, returned and was arrested ; and after a short period in Poona Jail he was removed to the house of his brother, Sarat Chandra Bose, at Kurseong near Darjeeling, where he was allowed certain concessions. In March, 1937, he was set at liberty. His conduct of affairs as the Congress President did not, from the start, produce a very favourable impression in high Congress circles ; but it was under his regime, though probably under Mr. Gandhi's dictation, that affairs in the Congress Ministry in the Central Provinces, which had been giving trouble for some time, culminated in a resolution of the Working Committee on July 26th, 1938, condemning the Premier, Dr. Khare, for errors of judgment and gross indiscipline on account of which he was excommunicated from the party for a period of two years. This resolution did not escape general criticism, even in the Congress press. There was considerable sympathy with Dr. Khare, and the overweening interference of the High Command in Provincial affairs was condemned.

During the remainder of 1938 it became clear on more than one occasion that Mr. Gandhi and the Congress President did not see eye to eye ; but at the beginning of 1939 the re-election of Mr. Subhas Bose as President threw the Congress world into confusion. It had been the accepted practice for some years for the nominee of Mr. Gandhi to become President without a contest. On

this occasion three candidates were nominated by the electors, of whom Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was regarded as the "official" candidate.

1939. Fall of Subhas Bose.

Some days before the poll he resigned in favour of Mr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Mr. Subhas Bose, who might not have stood against the Maulana, refused to leave the field to Mr. Sitaramayya in spite of a personal appeal from Mr. Gandhi. He was eventually elected by a majority of about 200 in a poll of about 3,000, whereupon Mr. Gandhi announced that Mr. Bose's victory was a defeat for himself and indicated that he and his followers in the Working Committee, the Provincial Ministries and the Congress Party would be willing to leave the party and surrender the field to Mr. Bose and his faction. The latter was thus placed in a dilemma, for he was well aware that he could achieve little without Mr. Gandhi's support. Mr. Gandhi himself also had to recover the ground temporarily lost by the Congress right wing and it was expected that he would do so by concentrating on the campaign which had been under way for some time against the Indian States, thus diverting attention from domestic difficulties. But no one foresaw the sensational course which he actually followed. This was the famous Rajkot "fast unto death", the details of which and its termination after four days as the result of the Viceroy's intervention, are sufficiently well known not to need

The Rajkot Fast

description. On February 22nd, 1939, the Congress Working Committee had ceased to exist ; twelve of the fifteen members announced their resignation in a joint letter which invited the President to choose his own cabinet and follow his own policy, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru issued a long statement attacking Mr. Subhas Bose.

1935-1939

In this state of affairs and with the limelight concentrated on Rajkot, the Congress session at Tripuri began on March 7th—the same day as that on which Mr. Gandhi's fast was broken. Mr. Bose purported to be ill and attended the session on a stretcher. The main resolution, which was carried in the subjects committee by 218 votes to 135 and in the open session without division, affirmed adherence to Mr. Gandhi's policies and programme and expressed confidence in the work of the defunct Working Committee. It also requested the President to select a new Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of the Mahatma. Mr. Gandhi and the Congress President were unable to agree on the personnel of the new committee and on April 29th Mr. Subhas Bose resigned his office. Such was the

**Bose's
Resignation.
Forward Bloc.**

revenge taken by the Congress dictator on one who, exactly three months before, had been duly and democratically elected, but in defiance of his wishes, to the post of

Congress President. After his resignation Mr. Subhas Bose formed a rival party within the Congress known as the Forward Bloc. The revolutionary programme of this party and its adherents is today well known. Its leader is now openly in the employment of the Axis Powers, but it was not in anticipation of these happenings that Mr. Gandhi's action was guided in the episode that we have just described.

A further feature to which we must draw attention during this period was the increasing hostility towards Congress of the Muslim League under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah. There had been corres-

**Growing Hostility
of Muslim League
to Congress.**

pondence between him and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during 1938 on the possibilities of a Congress-League rapprochement, but no practical result was achieved. It was a fact

that in the six purely Congress Ministries there were only five Muslim Ministers to 30 non-Muslims and thus Congress was revealed as a predominantly Hindu body. As time went on the attitude of the Muslim League hardened and, as everyone now knows, the eventual

resignation of the Congress Ministries after war was declared led Mr. Jinnah to call upon all Muslims throughout India to observe December 22nd as a day of thanksgiving for deliverance from the "tyranny, repression and injustice" of the Congress regime in the Provinces. Whether the charges were fully justified is a matter that may be open to argument, but it is at least significant that the termination of dyarchy in the Provinces was not made the subject of any similar celebration.

A final facet of Congress policy to which attention must be drawn during this period was its attitude towards the great war which was then brewing. We have

**Congress attitude
to War.**

already noticed the resolution of the Faizpur Congress on the subject of the utilization of Indian manpower and resources in the event of war and Pandit Nehru's hints that it might give India the opportunity he desired. In September, 1938, occurred the European crisis which ended with the Munich agreement. Much sympathy with Czechoslovakia and disappointment at the terms of the settlement were then expressed both by the press and by politicians in India; and it is interesting to note that the comment of a competent observer at that time was to the effect that the disappointment was partly explained by the probable belief that India had much to gain, and little to lose, from a war in Europe. For the nationalist there was the hope of obtaining further constitutional concessions, either as the reward of support, or as the price for refraining from embarrassing agitation, while industrialists and agriculturists had reason to expect higher profits and prices. The Working Committee at that time deliberately avoided any pronouncement of policy; but it was believed that most of its members were in favour of bargaining with the British Government for constitutional favours in return for co-operation, while Mr. Gandhi desired to impose his view that the principle of non-violence required complete detachment from the conflict. It was then pointed out that, if this view had prevailed, the Congress Ministries could not have remained in office for long, since a war would require in the Provinces positive activities in support of the war effort.

1935-1939

The proposal to amend the Government of India Act in order to give the Central Government power in an emergency to take executive action in matters within the provincial field in time of war led to renewed discussion of the question whether India should co-operate. The speeches and writings of Congressmen exhibited wide differences of view—some taking the line that Great Britain's difficulty should be India's opportunity, and others, while avowing their detestation of the Nazi leaders, professing inability to assist in any war in which the defence of "British Imperialism" might be involved. It is remarkable in the light of after events to note that in July, 1939, Mr. Gandhi wrote in "Harijan" that any mass agitation must become violent, discredit Congress and ruin its cause. In August, 1939, the despatch of Indian troops to Egypt and Singapore produced a long resolution by the Working Committee, in session at Wardha, repeating the determination of Congress to oppose any attempt to "impose" a war on India and calling upon all Congress members of the Central Assembly to refrain from attending the session which was due to take place at the beginning of September.

War was declared on September 3rd, 1939, and with that date our story ends. How the Congress leaders under Mr. Gandhi have used, or misused, the unrivalled opportunity which this war presented of securing for India that freedom for which

Declaration of War. all the forces of good in the world are today striving is a subject that requires separate treatment. Those who are interested and who do not already know the answer will find it clearly set forth in a pamphlet entitled "Congress and the Axis". To anyone who has read *this* record with an open mind the attitude of the Congress leaders towards the war and the contortions through which they have passed in their attempts to justify it in the eyes of the world will not, at least, come as a surprise.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

It would be a gross misunderstanding of the purpose for which this review has been written if it were supposed that its intention is anti-national. So far from that being the case, the object is to suggest that the cause of Indian freedom has for many years been prejudiced by the mismanagement of the *small clique which has throughout dominated the policy and methods of the Indian National Congress. It may be commonly supposed—and that supposition has, no doubt, been sedulously fostered by the leaders of the Congress Party themselves—that the action which Government have been compelled to take from time to time against the activities of Congress under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi, and against Mr. Gandhi himself and his principal lieutenants, is an indication of their opposition to Indian political progress. Once it could be clearly recognized that this is not so; that there is a vast body of opinion in England and throughout the world which genuinely sympathises with Indian aspirations; and that the action of Government has never been directed against the people of India, but only against the methods enjoined by the

*During the last twenty years the control of Congress policy, under Mr. Gandhi, has been vested in about a dozen persons. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was Congress President in 1923. He is President in 1943 and has been so since 1940. Between 1923 and 1940 eleven other persons, including Mr. Gandhi, have held the office of President, of whom seven are still alive. Of these seven, most of whom are sixty years old or older, four are still members of the present Working Committee; Mr. Gandhi himself is no longer a member of Congress; and the other two are Pandit M. M. Malaviya and Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose. A constitutionalist like the late Mr. Satyamurthi was never a member of the Working Committee. Mr. C. Rajagopalchari has never been President. The Working Committee of fifteen, which is supposed to be elected annually, has been filled since the withdrawal of civil disobedience in 1934 by only thirty persons. Since 1936 only four new names have appeared in the list; since 1940, when the last committee was elected, no new names have been added; and of the nineteen persons who have held office since that date, seven first held office over twenty years ago and four not less than fifteen years ago.

comparatively small body which has clung so tenaciously and for so long to its control over Indian political affairs, the way would be clear for a far better understanding of the relations between Britain and India. There are those, no doubt, who hold, and will continue to hold, that the struggle of the past twenty-five years has been an heroic fight by a subject people passionately desiring freedom against the domination of a mighty Empire unwilling to part with power. Others will take a precisely opposite view and see in the struggle we have recorded the equally resolute determination of a great nation, in the face of unremitting obstruction, to part with power and hand over responsibility to a people whose chosen leaders have been unwilling to accept it.

We must leave the reader to decide for himself between these opposing views ; but from those who have studied the sequence of events with an open mind we have at least the right to expect a plain answer to the following questions :—

(1) Is it, or is it not, a fact that each successive advance in the path of political progress has been met with unvarying opposition from Mr. Gandhi and those who have surrendered their judgment to him, while on every occasion when his influence has been withdrawn or reduced for the moment, there has always been an equally patriotic and no less intelligent body of public opinion in India which has been in favour of pursuing the path of progress by co-operative and constitutional means ?

(2) Is it, or is it not, a fact that none of the efforts of Mr. Gandhi and his followers has ever been successful or led to any tangible results except turmoil, disorder, violence and suffering ? Has he not also enormously strengthened the hands of those who have always opposed political progress in India and weakened the case of the people of India themselves ?

(3) Quite apart from politics, and even in fields in which Mr. Gandhi has enjoyed full liberty of action without any official opposition—the fields, for instance, of communal unity, untouchability, prohibition and even spinning—has Mr. Gandhi ever carried to completion

any task to which he has set his hand? Has he not taken every one of these projects to a certain point and then left them unfinished?

(4) Is it, or is it not, at least possible, human nature being what it is, and given the common wish on both sides to see India a free nation, that methods of co-operation would, at the highest, in the words of a great Viceroy, have provided "the more excellent way" and, at the lowest, have paid better? If those methods had been followed, might not India have made far quicker progress towards the desired goal and might she not today have been taking a proud and free part in the world-wide struggle against Nazism instead of floundering in the seas of political frustration and deadlock?

Unless all these questions can conscientiously be answered in the negative, surely the time has come to consider whether India would not do better to discard a set of leaders who have failed her so badly. Instead of blaming Government for the failure of these leaders, cannot India select a man, or a set of men, who will carry the country onwards instead of keeping her back and who will replace by a constructive policy the deadening and negative creeds which during the last twenty-five years have only rendered the people of India less and less competent to accept their rightful destiny?

It has been said that Mr. Gandhi is a hundred years ahead of his time. That may be so. Only the passage of a century can tell. If it is so, it is equally true that a man so far in advance of the times is likely to be of no greater use as a practical leader of affairs in the workaday world in which we live than one who is no less behind them. What is wanted in India today is a young man, or a set of young men, possessed of vision without being visionaries; young men who can take a realistic view of things as they are, who can combine constancy with the courage to compromise when compromise is necessary; and who above all can mobilize the vast forces of goodwill which, in the long run, must always prevail over the evil miasma of mistrust, suspicion and hatred.

